THE THRUSH AND THE JAY

SYLVIA LYND

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Many of the poems in this volume have already appeared in The Nation *and of the prose sketches in that review and in* The New Statesman.

THE THRUSH AND THE JAY

BY

SYLVIA LYND
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TO YOU
MY DEAR ROBERT LYND

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THE THRUSH AND THE JAY

THE BARBER'S FIRST BROTHER

Know, O Prince of the Faithful, that the first (who was named El-Bakbuk) . . . practised the art of a tailor in Baghdad.

I.

The window is round,
The sky is blue,
Two doves sit still
On the window-sill;
With murmurous sound
They coo and coo.

The window is high
Above the ground,
I get no sight
By day or night,
But the blue sky
Empty and round.

II.

I peeped through the lattice
And saw my love passing.
How happy the companions
With whom he went laughing!
How happy the people
That walked the same street!
How happy the stones
That were pressed by his feet!
Though I should sit watching
A year and a day
How small is the chance
He will come the same way!
Oh, what is my hope
In the maze of the hours?
What hope has one flower
In a garden of flowers?

III.

Could I follow my thought
I should find out the place
Where, under cool trees,
My love takes his ease,
Could I follow my thought
I should look on his face.

Do I stay, do I go,
Do I waken or sleep,
Do I ripen and rot
Like a fruit tasted not,
He will care not nor know
Though I wither and weep.

IV.

I press to the lattice
My black brilliant eye,
To see in the sunlight
My true love go by.
As a twig of the willow
He is graceful and sleek,
He has a round mole
On the moon of his cheek;
His lips are of scarlet,
Of honey his mouth,
The perfume he brings
Is a wind of the south.
He sees not, he turns not,
Though close I am pressed,
Till the shape of the lattice
Is marked on my breast.

V.

Turn, my love, and you will see
Hair more black than ebony,
Parted lips, more crimson far
Than roses of Damascus are,
Archèd eyebrows, fringèd eyes,
Like the maids of Paradise,
Swooning am I, all outspread,
Fallen flower with petals shed!

VI.

I stretched forth my hand
To feed my dove
Circling out there
In the blue air,
Tip-toe did I stand,
And I thought of my love.

It was a strange thing
I did not understand,
Someone caught and kissed
My hand and my wrist—
While I stood wondering
Someone kissed my hand!

VII.

I sent to the tailor
Who stitches and stitches
A piece of yellow satin
To make me new breeches,
A piece of yellow satin,
And of red flowered silk,
For a jacket to cover
My sides white as milk.
I know a small door,
And I know a small stair,
And I know a good hour
When my father's at prayer,
And I know a wise woman
Is honest and old,
Has a necklace of pearls,
And a purse full of gold.

A YOUNG FARMER TO AN OLD TUNE

The bearded barley, it grows so high,
When the wind comes from the South;
And it whispers, whispers close to my ear
With the slow, soft voice of my darling:
Along the edge of the field I lie,
And chew young grasses in my mouth.
Oh, it brings the sweetest time of the year,
The wind that shakes the barley.

'Tis good to stretch, and to watch the sky,
While waiting for my dear;
The birds are moving among the corn,
The finch, the crow, and the starling:
A thousand times I think she is nigh,
Tho' 'tis but rustling stalks I hear.
Oh, she's the wind of the summer morn,
The wind that shakes the barley.

The barley bends when the wind comes by
With the swish of silken dresses,
The rippling fields, far off and near,
Are laughing like my darling;
I turn my head, and she is nigh
To greet me with caresses.
Oh, it brings the sweetest time of the year—
The wind that shakes the barley.

EAT, DRINK, AND BE MERRY

In her dark green cashmere frock she appeared in the midst of the other children like a moor-hen among sailing white-robed swans. But, unlike the moor-hen, she had not scarlet feet as a compensation. All round her she heard clear voices eager to reveal what their owners had discovered:

"Why, she hasn't a party dress! That little girl hasn't a party dress!"

She heard them with an amiable detachment, for she was very young. Her sister's hand, however, suddenly held hers tightly, and she was led up to the hostess.

"She didn't like being left out," her sister said, "so mother said might I bring her too?"

And there she was.

Then somebody began playing the piano, and all the grown-up people rushed about calling out to one another, "There are twenty-five—no, there are twenty-six," until they had got a long line of

chairs into the middle of the room, and all the children began running round them. She went and ran round them too. All at once the music stopped, and the other children scrambled into the chairs and sat in them. She was left standing out on the floor with a little girl in pink. Someone began to shout "There's one chair left! there's one chair left! Quick, Margherita, run, run!" And the little girl in pink was seized by some big hand and rushed up the room into the vacant chair. After that someone else came and took *her* by the hand and led her away from the others, and put her near the wall and said: "You're out." It was like having been naughty. The music began again, and the other boys and girls went on running round the chairs, and each time the music stopped one or other of them was said to be "out." This went on until only two big girls were left. They were sisters, and the one with spectacles sat the other one on to the floor.

Then someone said, "Now we'll have dumb-crambo to make us cool"; and again a hand came and moved her, and a voice said, "Out of the way, little girl," and "This game is too 'old' for you." This time she found a chair with padded arms, and she climbed into it and sat enthroned with her legs straight out before her, until an old

lady with a stick and teeth that snapped funnily in front came and said, "You are a very *little* girl to have such a BIG chair!" and she was lifted out of it, and the old lady sat down in her stead, and she had to stand near the wall again for a long, long time. Then the door was flung open, and everyone cried "Tea, tea!" And the other children began jumping up and down, and she began to jump up and down with them. They all trooped into another room, and her sister found her and took her by the hand again; but they were soon separated, and she was seated up to the table on a chair that was much too low.

The table was a glorious sight. It was covered with all sorts of things that she wanted at once to eat. In the centre was a great white cake, with candles round it and tiny flags all over the top. There were crackers, too, lying about between the plates, and the other children were looking at them and shaking them and wondering what was inside, and all talking at once. "Look, this one has a clown on! Look, this one has a horseshoe! Look, this one has a bunch of flowers!" And a little boy said, "I'm not allowed to eat cream things"; and a little girl said, "Oh, *I* may, if they're fresh!" Then the little boy said proudly, "*I* mayn't eat nuts." Then another boy said very shrilly, "I

mayn't eat Turkish delight." And so on, until the real business of tea began.

With her wide eyes scarcely higher than the level of the table, she sat and longed for things. She felt she wanted to taste all the deliciousness that she could see, but before she had left her own house she had promised to take what was offered her and say "Thank you"; and some of the things she most wanted never came her way at all. She got bread and butter to begin with, and then brown bread and butter, which was worse, and then a queen cake. None of the pink and white biscuits, or even the sponge fingers, came near her, and once when the chocolate cakes were next door but one, a slim hand, with bright nails and many sparkling rings, pounced talon-like upon the plate and bore it away right out of her view. There was "skin" in her milk too, and there was no spoon with which to fish it out. She sat still at last, with the dry, uneaten half of the queen cake on the plate before her, and it was with difficulty that she kept the tears from overflowing her eyes.

And now they were cutting the Christmas cake, such splendid slices, coated with white sugar from bottom to top. Then a grown-up voice said: "Oh, those slices are *much* too big. They'll never get through those!" And they took the knife

again and cut all the slices in halves horizontally, so that some were nearly all sugar and some had hardly any sugar at all. Then they handed them round. She watched them coming towards her down the table. Some of the children took the top pieces with all the sugar; a few took the lower pieces that had hardly any. She hoped and hoped that one of the top pieces would come to her; but the girl next to her took the sugary bit, and she felt she must take the bit without the sugar, and the plate passed on.

After that her impressions were a confusion of noises, in which the choking and carrying out into the hall of a small boy in a sailor suit and the pulling of the crackers were inextricably tangled. She found the crackers too frightening to pull herself, much as she longed for their contents, and she could not bring herself to imitate a neighbour with a round comb, who seized a great many and tore them open single-handed, saying, "This is what *I* do." She felt *that* to be a very naughty little girl. So she covered her own ears with her hands to shut out the noise, until one of the children ran to her and put a tall paper cap on her head, and said, "Now you're a dunce!" She was vexed at that, and snatched the cap off and threw it on the ground.

After that they were told to wait for the Christmas tree. They passed the time in an eager babble of conversation, showing one another the treasures they had found in the crackers (the caps they rather despised), the india-rubber faces that squinted and pushed out their tongues, the little horses, the bracelets, the whistles, the puzzles, the compasses. One of the little girls asked her what *she* had got, and when she opened her hand and showed a bunch of flowers that came only from the outside of a cracker, the little girl was openly scornful. Gazing down at her from a superior height, she propounded the following questions:

"Have you got a scrap-book?"

"What church do you go to?"

"What chapel, then?"

"Don't you go at all, then?"

"How many servants do you keep?"

Satisfied as to these points, another group received her attention, and she was soon asking them what size of shoes they took, and why their mothers allowed them to have short sleeves to their party frocks.

And then they went back into the drawing-room for the Christmas tree. It seemed immensely tall, as tall as any tree that ever grew in a forest. It blazed with countless flames and globes and stars

and festoons of brightness. Father Christmas himself was there in a red, furred gown powdered over with snow, and the little girl who had torn open the crackers screamed and screamed, and had to be taken home. All the time people were cutting presents off the tree and handing them to Father Christmas to give to the children, and when they were all cut off someone called out, "Has everyone got a present?" and she found herself pushed forward close to the tall tree as a little girl with none. So Father Christmas gave her a parcel too, and then the grown-up people began blowing out the candles on the tree, and one little boy ran to Father Christmas and cried, "Why, it's Uncle Arthur! I know it's Uncle Arthur. I know him by his socks!" And Father Christmas pushed back his hood and unhooked his beard, and the little boy wore it for the rest of the evening.

Then the lights were turned on in the room again, and they were all able to examine their presents. There were dogs that jumped, and eggs that contained lots and lots of little eggs, and paint boxes, and dolls, and engines, and monkeys, and tea-sets, and all kinds of things. Her present was a clockwork spider that was joined to a fly by a piece of string. She was looking at it when Father Christmas came up. He was quite pleasant with-

out his beard, and he said, "Hullo, what have you got?" She handed up the toy to him, and he examined it critically. She stood and gazed at him with steady, trustful eyes. Just then their hostess passed near them, and he called out, "I say, how does this work?" The hostess looked for a moment and her face became pink.

"That, oh, that's broken!" she said quickly, and turned away.

Father Christmas almost looked embarrassed too, and he said, "I'm afraid this spider has caught cold. He can't run up the string any more," and then, more cheerfully, "Suppose we dance instead?"

So she danced with Father Christmas until she was "fetched," and, secure in gaiters, woolly gloves and scarf, was escorted home safely to her mother.

"And was it a nice party?" She had not considered that idea before, but, of course, she was sure that it was. It was with astonishment that she heard her sister's voice, taut with suppressed tears: "They said she hadn't a party dress!" She had forgotten all about that.

* * * *

And was it a nice party? Why, surely it was.

She did not doubt it then, and why should she feel now as she did not feel a score (at least) of years ago? Ought she not instead to sympathise rather with the hostess who, by her presence in dowdy everyday clothes, was torn who knows from what garden of illusion, and forced, moreover, to add to the tea table an "odd" cup, and possibly to introduce a chair out of the kitchen? Well, if she cannot entirely sympathise, she can forgive —at least, she thinks she can; but this is what she says:

If in the next world there is no other candidate for the post, she will hold up her hand and say, "Please may I be the Patron of the Christmas Parties?" She will go to all the parties, even when they happen on the same day. She will wear no halo, but a rather smart hat, and it is possible, if she has her way, that the pearls in her ears will be the biggest in the room. At tea she will stand behind the chairs of all the children who have no grey-coated nurse or velvet mother to look after them, and she will say into each ear, "Are you high enough, darling one?" and if they are not she will fetch them cushions or books to sit on. She will see that all the cups are filled, and she will put the brown bread and butter away on the sideboard, and when the cakes or the animal biscuits

come round she will point to the one they want with "I say, have that one," or "Have a rabbit," or "Have a swan; you had a squirrel last time." As to the Christmas cake, I doubt if there will be any halving of slices while she is in the room; but if there is, she will carry round the plate herself and say, "Please do take the sugary bit for goodness' sake!"

TO MY CHILDREN, S. AND B. J.

Belovèds, when you smile at me,
It is the birthday of my soul,
It is the day of blossoming;—
The day of welcome to the sun
When lambs do play and birds do sing,
When flowers blow and glad streams run.
Belovèds, when you smile at me,
Then am I healèd and made whole,
It is the day of blossoming,
It is the birthday of my soul.

The God who loves the Seraphim
Will guard my lambs of snowy fleece,
Will guard my little singing birds;—
Will make them gentle, make them good,
Will fill their hearts with merry words,
With valour, and with hardihood.
The God who loves the Seraphim
Will make a mighty shield of peace
To guard my little singing birds,
My little lambs of snowy fleece.

And I will travel all the way
That you may enter Paradise;
May enter by the pearly gate
The meadows of the blessed sea.
The way that is both long and strait
We'll shorten with good company.
And I must travel all the way
Among the simple and the wise
That enter by the pearly gate,
That enter into Paradise.

I that should lead, so will be led
By small strong hands and wayward feet,
Because they must not fare forlorn.
And if I go not who will keep
Your lips from poison, hands from thorn?
And who will lay you down to sleep?
I that should lead, so will be led
By careless bonds that are most sweet;
Because they must not fare forlorn,
The small strong hands, the wayward feet.

Under the hawthorns we will play,
(As you play now upon the grass),

And see new wonders everywhere;—
And all the flowers, like stars, will shine,
And you shall wear them in your hair,
And I will wear some, too, in mine.
Under the hawthorns we will play,
And watch the stately angels pass,
And see new wonders everywhere—
As you play now upon the grass.

A SUSSEX CHILD

A LITTLE wood of beech trees made,
A flitting light, a flitting shade,
Wood sorrels bright
For lips' delight,
And boughs low hung
To swing among.

Beyond, a hill that naked lies
Asleep, beneath the changing skies,
And gentle sheep
Faint converse keep,
To the soft knell
Of the wether's bell.

There you may leap and shout and race,
Or breathlessly lie on your face
And watch the sea,
And clouds that flee,
And larks that shrill
All about the hill.

And carts that crawl from far below,
And climb the white road creaking slow;—
Or you fly a kite
If the wind is right,
And you know the way,
And it's a holiday.

A DAY IN TOWN.

HAROLD had an influenza cold. It was very vexatious for him to be laid up just then, when they were moving. He was sure himself that he had got it standing about in draughts while he told the men where to put the things. Her part had been to sit quietly on a packing-case and not get in the way, and like a little mouse so had she sat. Harold almost seemed to resent that now. Still, he couldn't deny that he had made the sound represented by "Tush, tush!" when she had come to him with his hat in her hand. Of course it was at an anxious moment. He was deciding where the Sheraton bookcase should go. Well, now he was laid up.

As she settled herself in the corner seat of the ladies' carriage with her back to the engine (Harold's instructions) she realised that this was the first time she had ever journeyed alone, almost the first time she had been alone in her life. Her child-

hood, looked back upon, seemed to have been trotted through with her small hand placed confidingly in a large one, her girlhood in walking "double file" with other girls in a variety of coats and skirts and a monotony of sailor-hats with the school riband on them, or in company with mother or governess avoiding the perils between Porchester Gardens and Baker Street, where, unaccompanied, "anything might happen." From her mother's care she had gone to the care of Harold. Perhaps "charge" would be a more accurate word. There was something, she was forced to admit, overtight in Harold's grip of her. It was less suggestive of a courier than of a constable. Yes, that was it: she had been given in charge.

Harold was fifteen years older than she. When she had met him he was not a young man, but a young bachelor; there is an enormous gulf between the two—and she sometimes wondered if he had ever got over it. Harold was an architect and he knew at least twenty times more about the arrangement of a house than she did. Harold must have air, and so they lived in the country. Harold did not care for going out in the evening or, indeed, for any definite pleasure. His father, the distinguished Don, had written a book on the Subjunctive Mood, and in the subjunctive mood they seemed to live,

move, and have their being. Time hung a little heavy sometimes.

The train was slowing down towards Victoria. She hoped Harold's fire was being kept up properly. A porter swung open the carriage door.

"Any luggage, miss?"

She beamed at him.

"No, thank you."

It gave her a tiny shock of pleasure to be called "Miss" again. Everywhere that she went with Harold she was addressed as "Madam." That word had always made her feel overwhelmed and shy, and the first pride of it was over now. She felt very light and free as she stepped on to the platform. She held up her head. She was a slender, pale, elegant young woman, not very tall, with cloudy and appealing blue eyes. In her simple fawn-coloured travelling clothes and plain hat she looked even younger and more unsophisticated than she was. She took out the paper Harold had given her and re-read her instructions.

"Corner, back engine, ladies' carriage." (That was done.)

"One dozen pure linen handkerchiefs, Army and Navy Stores." (These colds always went so badly to his head. They were the only things that did.)

"Taxicab to Cork Street Hotel" (where they had stayed once together) "for lunch.

"Match curtains in Regent Street. Pay for Cousin Dora's wedding present." (He had selected two pendants provisionally for Dora's final decision.)

"Tea at Cork Street Hotel.

"Home by the 5.5.

"Take care of the crossings."

Moreover, she was to take taxicabs at every available spot and bid the driver to drive carefully. Her purse bulged with money. Harold was very decent at times. She walked up the platform.

The handkerchiefs were the first things to be got.

"And not to leave the parcel behind me anywhere," she repeated the parting words.

Outside the station a woman was selling violets. "Sixpence to you, miss." She bought a large bunch and fastened them into her coat—only then did she remember that Harold never allowed her to buy flowers in the street. Goodness knew where they had been! Curiously enough, the street was for her the place where they seemed most insistently attractive. Well, she had bought them now. She need not wear them going home.

"I want some handkerchiefs for a gentleman, please."

"Yes, madam; what kind of handkerchiefs?"

She consulted her list.

"Pure linen handkerchiefs, if you please."

Boxes were shown her. "Or this is very nice if it is for a present, madam?"

No, it was not for a present. It was for a bad cold. Yes, those would do and she would take them with her.

As she wrapped the parcel the girl behind the counter hoped that the young gentleman would soon be better.

"Indeed, yes, so do I. You see, it's my husband."

Was it possible that Madam was married? Well, the girl behind the counter would never have believed that!

"Madam" was unreasonably glad.

Was it unkind to Harold not to wish his existence to be printed all over her?

Outside the stores she hailed a taxicab.

"And drive slowly, please," she said dutifully; but then, because it was so absurd to make the man think one was afraid when one wasn't, she added: "Because I want to look at the shops."

She did want to look at the shops. All the same, she felt a little guilty towards Harold. He had meant her to have taught that one taximan at least

that there is for some of us a higher sense of public duty than is compatible with scorching through the streets. It struck her that if Harold were to be run over at any time, he would be even more shocked than hurt. She reached the hotel in Cork Street, and paid, with an addition, her fare.

"Thank you, miss," said the driver.

It was very pleasant.

For lunch she had a sole with *mousseline* sauce, a cutlet and peas, apricots and junket—just the sort of meal she could have had at home. That was the worst of Harold: he did like things to be the same.

She straightened her hat and sallied out again. So far the day had been uneventful.

"Shall I call a taxi, miss?" asked the porter, with the voice of conscience.

"No, thank you," she said distinctly. "I shall walk."

She walked all the way up Piccadilly and all the way round Regent Street. The air was filled with sun, the pavement with strolling women in spring hats. She consulted her paper again. It said: "Match curtains." She found the shop and pushed through swing doors into its glowing, many-coloured, chintz-hung recesses. She was greeted by a young man whose baptismal name could only have been "Hyacinth."

She produced her pattern; he produced a book of patterns, too. They found the one Harold wanted in the book; but, oh, incredible, that design was no longer in stock! It was rather staggering.

"Could I perhaps find you something somewhat similar?" asked the beautiful young man.

"I'm afraid I can hardly decide about another. You see, these curtains are for my husband's study. If it was any other room—but I don't think I could even then."

"If you will leave me the pattern, madam, I will ascertain what we have at the warehouse and let you know."

The blue eyes gazed into his.

"But, you see, I promised I would look at the stuff myself——" Her voice trailed helplessly.

"If you care to wait, madam, I will telephone to the warehouse and ascertain."

She waited. He returned, suave, blond, and graceful.

Yes, the material was in stock. He had sent for some. It would be here—he consulted the watch on his wrist—in forty-five minutes. She thanked him; she would call again. This parcel, was it hers? Why, yes, it was! She thanked him. She must not forget the handkerchiefs. That would be dreadful.

Dora's pendant was next on her list.

She would soon see about that. She saw it packed into a green cardboard box, with the card: "Every good wish from Mr. and Mrs. ——" on it, and addressed and stamped and ready to be sent off.

Then she strolled into the street again. Forty-five minutes, Hyacinth had said. She had another twenty yet to pass. Her eye roved to the windows. She decided to buy a hat; she felt suddenly frumpish in her old one.

A girl with a powdered nose attended her.

"Has madam any particular choice as to colour?"

Madam had none. She just wanted, she confided suddenly, something very pretty and becoming.

They tried on several hats, all of which, irrespective of their merits, the girl pronounced to be charming. Then at last from the window she withdrew a little black gauzy one with a single large white rose in it.

"A very pretty thing and a design that will be worn all the summer."

They tried it on. Yes, it was irresistible.

"But the question is whether this isn't too young? Does it make me look a married woman?"

"Oh, no, madam; indeed it doesn't," said the white-nosed girl; "but then you are not, are you?"

"I am indeed."

Exclamations, wonderings! At the end of them, of course, she bought the hat.

She turned again to the shop of the cretonnes. Hyacinth was busy with an old lady among the art serges. It was tiresome of him.

The shopwalker approached her.

"Shall I find someone else to serve you, madam, or would you rather—wait?"

She said she would wait, and then to her horror, before his significant smile, she found herself blushing, actually blushing, about a young man in a shop! What was the matter with her? What would Harold think? That wouldn't bear considering at all. She steadied herself.

Yes, the material had come. Languidly did Hyacinth cut the strings of the parcel. He hoped she had not been kept waiting too long.

"Oh, no," she smiled. "I've been buying a hat."

So he saw, he said. They laughed together.

With what graceful nonchalance Hyacinth twittered his scissors! How swiftly he mastered the brown paper! How firm his knots were! Never, in all her life, should she be as capable as that.

In the street again she saw what time it was—past four o'clock! No time for tea at that old hotel. She did not want to eat Genoa cake, in any case; who, save in the last necessity, ever did? She found a tea-shop and ate an éclair and another cake shaped like a mushroom and a small brown frilled one that was flavoured with liqueur. Catching sight of herself in a mirror on her way to the door, she admitted that Harold would not like the hat. It made her too obviously pretty. "Cheap," he called it. He liked her to be just not plain. She walked to the Circus and waited for a 'bus. Harold was very decent about money; still, the hat was an extravagance, especially as she might never be let wear it again. So she stood slim and poised with the large bag containing her old hat in her hand, and the violets at her breast, looking, she told herself gaily, like a little milliner. The 'bus sidled to the edge of the pavement and she got into it. At the same moment she realised that she had just time for her train, and that she had lost the handkerchiefs. As the 'bus charged the traffic she wondered with flickering anxiety where she had left them. She had meant to be so careful. What would Harold say? He would never forgive her. He would feel he had been forgotten: that she had gone buying herself hats when he was

suffering. It had a look of the grossest negligence. He would never believe that she had thought of him all day, as she had in one way or another. Oh, dear!

Once in the train, she dropped the violets out of the window and put on her original hat. The new one she would reserve for a more propitious occasion. She sighed softly as she stepped out of the station fly and rang at her front door. (Only Harold had a key. She might lose one. He was quite right.)

She put down her parcels on the hall table, they were heavy as lead. A knife was brought from the kitchen, and she began to cut ruefully through the fair string of Hyacinth's lattice-work.

"How has the master been?"

"Much the same, I think, ma'am."

She spread out the cretonne. In the midst of its exotic folds was a small parcel—the handkerchiefs, the pure linen handkerchiefs! Hyacinth had saved her. Dear Hyacinth! Without a word, without the least puckering of an eyebrow! There was tact, resource, sympathy, understanding!

She ran upstairs with a laugh.

THE FAIR PERSIAN

(*Then Enis-el-Jalis took the Lute.*
"*If she sing not well, O Ja'far,*" *said the Kalifeh,*
"*I will have her, and all who listen to her, crucified.*")

I.

Wine has set music to my tongue,
I will sing, O my belovèd, I will sing,
I will praise the time that we were young
And dwelt in your father's house in pleasure:—
This is no sorrowful measure,
Yet the tears to my eyelids spring,
And I weep ere the song has been sung.

Music has stirred wisdom in my breast,
It rises in my throat and takes wing,
I know that the present time is best,
And lament not for the days that are over:—
Have I not you, O my lover,
You unsurpassed by anything,
Have I not love for my guest?

II.

They took what you gave
  And went away,
Only I, your slave,
  Was left on a day.

I, and the wind crying
  Between floor and rafter,
Desolate sighing
  In the house of laughter.

Gone the sweet singing,
  Feasting and fine raiment,
No footfall ringing
  On the bare pavement.

In the midnight house
  No taper peeping,
Only the scratching mouse,
  And a young slave, weeping.

III.

Separation is bitterer than death,
Loneliness more wretched than the grave!
Your arms were my funeral wreath
Clasping, while I bade you farewell:—
Your tears on my bosom fell,
No other jewels you gave,
No perfumes but the sobbing of your breath.

A thousand pieces of gold
Is the splendid price of your slave.
Soon shall she be withered and old,
Shrunken, without longing or regretting:—
A little while and comes forgetting,
And knowledge all the beauty she shall have,
And a heart grown tranquil and cold.

Rest, my belovèd, be at rest,
Another will be pleasanter than I.
You shall know again merriment and jest,
Your house and your garments shall be handsome:—
I would give my soul as a ransom,
Shall I not offer willingly
My lips and my arms and my breast?

IV.

"Here's a slave girl to entice
Luxury from avarice,
Black of eye and white of skin,
With a mole upon her chin,
Sleek and smooth from hair to shoon,
Like a willow! Like a moon!

See the way she lifts her head!
See her lips a scarlet thread!
She can dance and play right well,
She can horoscopes foretell.
Like the angels she can sing,
This perfect thing!"
Stroking his beard the old Vizier
Drew near. . . .

V.

I saw the minaret
  In its slenderness
Against the morning set
  Companionless.

Away from all distress
  So quiet there,
Held in the soft caress
  Of the bright air.

Shadows of amethyst
  Brushing its white,
Gentle as eyelids kissed
  At end of night.

Seeing the minaret
Companionless,
How should my soul forget
Your tenderness?

VI.

Together, O belovèd, together we will go
Past the crooked vineyards where the round grapes grow,
Where the flashing lizards like green jewels run,
Where the twisted serpents lie basking in the sun.
For a robe of honour all the changing hours
Shall cover us with sunlight and stars and scented flowers.
The sands of the desert shall be our secret bed,
The wide sky of midnight shall shield us overhead.
You shall pluck the zither and I will sing a tune
To set young feet dancing to the round white moon,
And when the dance is ended, for a coaxing tale
The sheikhs shall pay us silver to peep beneath my veil.

VII.

There is a garden
With a fair pavilion,
It has a warden
With a nose vermilion.

He has drunk no wine
  For fifty years,
But now his limp locks twine
  About his ears.

Enis-el-Jalis
  Is singing to a lute
In the fair palace
  Of the garden of fruit.

There is an old man
  Silly as a calf,
Try as he can
  He is forced to laugh. . . .

(*Here the Kalifeh announces his identity.*)

THE GUILTY PASSION

She stood at the dressing-table, and questioned with her eyes the puzzled eyes in the looking-glass. It seemed to her as if the figure there were another woman sharing her bewilderment, a woman eager to sympathise with her, but empty of help.

"That it should have happened to me," she thought. "That it should have been this!"

She drew a chair to the table and sat down, with her chin propped upon her hands.

"I must think it out," her brain kept repeating; "I must try to understand it from the beginning."

But at once her thought ceased and she found herself sitting still and considering the appearance of the woman before her. It was an interesting, attractive face, but not beautiful enough to compel love. Its flaws tormented her. He had said, so once she had heard him, that he admired black hair. The hair in the mirror was a dusty sort of brown. No help there. She got up and walked about the room.

For a whole fortnight now, waking and sleeping, she had known her unhappiness. It was as if a blight had settled upon her, hiding all the zest and amusement of life. Her daily doings seemed like fretting waves on a grey sea of boredom. How dull she felt! Her gaiety before this disaster was as incomprehensible to her as the comforts of Eden must have seemed after the Fall. It was useless to disguise it from herself—she was in love. It had happened quite suddenly, and there was no reason for it. That was what made her so helpless. She had started awake one night in the small hours and heard his voice speak twice her Christian name; that was all. She had liked him always, of course, and is not liking itself perhaps, if there be any warmth in it, a promise, a foreshadowing, a pointing of the path at least toward love? She could not have loved him if she had not liked him. Should she have gone about, as so many women seem to do, disliking everyone a little? Should she have kept away from temptation? But she did not know it was temptation till she had yielded to it. Above all, she did not know she could be so silly. She raged at herself.

He was not half as nice as her husband, but she loved everything about him. He was not so handsome, or so kind, or, she could even concede, so

clever. He could give her nothing. He was causing her a great deal of suffering. A scandal presented neither the charm of need nor of originality. Above all, he was not in the least in love with her.

It was to that fact chiefly, indeed, that her unhappiness was due. It made the whole affair humiliating. It was not even a becoming subject for friendly, horrifying confidences. No one could pity or excuse her. She could not pity or excuse herself. She was ridiculous. Her heart must be bruised in secret. She saw the future stretching before her, a drab expanse of self-control and self-repression, and she was by nature a communicative woman.

She wished, in spite of the *rôle* being sadly out of date, that she could have played at *femme incomprise*. She found herself watching her husband with the hope that he would be rough or gross at times. But he was persistently the best and kindest of men. He gave her no justification. He thought she must be having headaches. At night when she cried a little in her corner over the hatefulness of everything, he would ask gently (was it with calculated stupidity?):—

"Have you a cold?"

And she would answer, "No."

Then he would say, "You're not crying, are you?"

And she would answer stubbornly, "No."

Then would come silence, a long, choking silence, in which he seemed to lie in ambush waiting for her to blow her nose.

When she thought him asleep she would pull out her handkerchief and snuffle softly into it, but it was an unsatisfactory way to weep, quietly like this, without big noisy sobs. Her state needed the expression of sobs. She wondered, angrily, how he could lie there and doze so calmly, turning an indifferent shoulder, when his whole life lay ruined at his side.

She longed for a place of her own to indulge her grief, but she could not make herself a separate bedroom without a fuss (the spare room was the nursery now), and without explanations that would put a grimness of reality on her absurd fancy. She wanted everything to remain unreal. She wanted to love her husband. She had to live with him for ever, and their life could be so happy. It was her duty to be happy. Her relations expected it of her. "I must be cheerful," she thought, "or people will get tired of me." She had been so fortunate, and though she had believed that she could not go scot-free, she had hoped that small worries, debts, a

risk of measles in the nursery, the fear and anxiety when the child was born, would placate destiny. It was so unfair. Any other misfortune could have been shared and so lightened, but this one was to be borne in solitude, in public solitude.

At first it had been her sin that troubled her. It was so base a treachery to the glad ordering of her life, and she had prayed to be freed from it. In the bath-room she had prayed, as that was the one place in the house secure from interruption, and her prayer had, in a sense, been answered, for after it at any rate she had found peace and joy in her heart, and an expectation of seeing the beloved at a tea party on the morrow.

In the end she had prayed that he might love her. It seemed incredible that she should be so miserable, and he be indifferent. Could she not believe that he was not indifferent? When she met him, could she not pretend he had come to meet her? If he picked up her table-napkin at a dinner party, might she not translate it to affectionate attentiveness? So many women flattered themselves that way. If he loved her, she thought it would draw the poison from her own wound. It did not comfort her to know how little she must really care if she could thus contentedly anticipate his suffering. She prayed that she might see him often. . . .

She crossed to the window, and looked down into the quiet street. The hot sunlight exposed its barrenness. She did not know when she should be seeing him again. It was nearly five days——

Downstairs in her household, afternoon stillness reigned. The ornaments on the drawing-room mantelpiece had been dusted, the new shade covered for the lamp. She was supposed to be lying on her bed, resting from these exertions. Her nurse, flushed and pushing the perambulator, turned the street corner. She was bringing Miss Baby in to her tea. The mother let the curtain fall stealthily, and stepped back into the room. She did not want to seem glad just then. Lately, when the thought of her child came, another thought came too: "If it were not for you, everything would be so simple." She heard the bustle in the hall subside, and her daughter being carried past her door, with loud "hushings," and a whispered "Don't wake mammy." Then she returned to the window. She leaned her forehead against the sash and placed her hands one on each side of her waist. Standing so, she felt like those old women who survey life perpetually from darkened rooms through the slanted modesty of their lace curtains. The blankness of such lives seemed smothering her; she felt in prison. Far up the street, on the opposite side,

she saw the postman coming—the postman, who brings to the suburbs invitations and bazaar notices at four o'clock. In her present mood, the zig-zag progress of his approach had the excitement of a military band. Next door he came, then over the road. "He will go by," she thought. "He will go by." For an intense moment she prayed that he might not pass her. Even a bill would be better than nothing. He had passed the gate. She hated him. No, he was coming in. Rat-tat!

As a precaution against curiosity, she kicked off her shoes, and lay down on the bed. The maid brought up her letter. The crisp envelope was familiar to her fingers, familiar, and how dear!

"Draw the curtains, please," she said to the maid, in a creaking, indifferent voice. It was hard to hide her eagerness.

The curtain-rings rang upon the poles, and yellow light flooded the room. Not till the door had shut did she behold her treasure. It was addressed in small, vertical, spasmodic handwriting —the usual handwriting of young men. She held it against her throat. It was from him.

He invited her to dine with him, and go to a theatre that night. Clang! clang! went the joyous cymbals in her brain. The shortness of the notice must mean that someone else had failed him, but

she did not trouble about that. She should see him. Her time of uncertainty was, for the present, over. For a moment her tedious orbit would brush the butterfly dance of his. Her cheeks became pink. Her eyes sparkled. She ran to romp with the baby. Laughter enveloped her. Her husband, caught in the whirlwind of her gaiety, circled, in the intervals of dressing, her body with his arms. She kissed his neck with warmth and enthusiasm. She loved all the world. She loved even her wretched thoughts for providing so extravagant a contrast to her happiness. They had helped, at any rate, to get rid of the afternoon.

Here was another chance of re-capturing her liberty. If she could make him love her, then surely she would be free. She sought out her prettiest gown. She fastened a flower in her hair. She felt lovely and adorable. She was following a singing star. The woman in the mirror, mimicking her brightness, seemed to dismiss her to prosperity, as if she were again a bride, with smiles of approval and encouragement.

A HOLY MAN IN THE DESERT

I.

My thoughts are pallid moths that flit and flit
About my soul's small upward-thrilling flame;
Their hovering wings do near extinguish it,
And in the heavy dark I sink in shame.
I want you not, uncalled to me you came,
Moth thoughts, soft thoughts, do not destroy my soul,
It is my lamp, my life, my happy whole,
It burned so calmly to the sacred name.

But now you were a host of golden bees
In that light gilded and emblazonèd,
Returning laden from the airy seas
With piled-up sweet and treasure harvested;
Your homing wings were decked and perfumèd
With secret buds and raptured flowers' embrace,
With swaying boughs that stroke the heavens' face,
And all the honey that the winds have shed.

The pale wings fall like petals on my breast,
I cannot brush them hence, I cannot strive,
They make a murmuring as they lie at rest
Sweeter than bee song in the summer hive,
They are more strong than I, more, more alive,
My light is quenched, yielding and dumb I hear
Stirring the dark, invincibly draw near
Thoughts that from out my heart I cannot drive.

II.

Dawn! And a clean air and a wind that blows
Cool as spring water in a hidden well
Through my dulled veins until the quick blood glows.
Dawn! And the new sun whitening my cell.
I, of my soul the vanquished sentinel,
With sudden gladness as new washed of sin,
Fling wide the door and all athirst drink in
The quiet world, the dew-drenched morning smell.

Bright and hard-fleshed am I as polished stone,
Clear as a cup of crystal without stain,
I stand upright and joy to stand alone,
And feel myself unmastered once again.

"Unmastered!" God forgive me! 'tis in vain
I seek to bow my head, for the old pride
Is obdurate and will not be denied
When under foot I think to have it slain.

Pardon me, O my God, for Thy good light
It is that puts repentance from my soul,
I cannot weep because the evil night
Is stripped from me and I am safe and whole;
I am my own thanksgiving, need not dole
To Thee tears and self-'braidings. Here I stand
Happy before the wonders of Thy hand,
The radiant morning and the long hill's roll.

THE SIXTH ACT.

The room was a panelled one, and the panelling had been painted white. Its milky surface gave back an uncertain glimmering to the ghostly, sunless daylight. It was a late afternoon at the slow end of winter.

In the deep-set window a woman was sitting. She was leaning against the glass, so that through her sleeve she could feel its chill upon the soft flesh of her arm, and through her thick hair it was cold upon her forehead. Her round, pretty head looked black against the pane. At her sides her hands lay, palm upwards, trailing, with fingers lightly curled, and her whole posture suggested an infinity of lassitude and sadness.

So she had been sitting all day, looking down into the street, or across the square to where the gaunt plane trees rattled their inky balls, until with her strained eyes she could see the dusk descending. Veil after blackish veil seemed to be lowered across the house-tops, to be dipped, to be

withdrawn, to be lowered again a little further. Her heart felt as if it would burst with the dull fatigue of idleness.

Everything changed, and everything was the same. Often she had sat like that in her old home before she was married, felt so waking, sleeping, cried out to herself in soft, despairing voice, "How many more times am I going to see that pattern of twigs out of my window, that church spire against the sky?" and then she had thought, "O God, if I should never see anything else all my life!" and her heart had contracted until she felt sick with anguish. Just such an anguish was stifling her now.

How much happier everyone else seemed than herself. She had only to catch a glimpse of them through the window to be sure of that. Children rolling hoops, nurses gossiping as they jogged the handles of perambulators, a servant girl smart in cap and apron with letters for the post, messenger boys, greengrocers, bakers, milkmen, even the lady from the corner house with the dyed hair and the lap-dog—all, all were happier than she. Most achingly she noticed the young women so like herself, only that they were busy, hastening home with flowers in their arms or cardboard boxes with cakes in them. And those fire-lit interiors, those

warm rooms, to screen which she could see the curtains even now being drawn, how she longed to be walking into one of them, part herself of the orderliness, the cheerful glow! What did it feel like to tread confidently a familiar hall, fling wide a door and cry, "Well, how has everything been?"

Or—the lonelier way, that had been her way, and was also very good and perhaps more distinguished—to ring a bell, and say:

"Bring me some tea-cakes, please. Be quick!"

She missed the entry of the maid with tea. In Cambridge Terrace her dullest days had held some such small mercy. How pleasant her housemaid's smile had been, sympathetic for the loneliness of a young wife, as she set out the table and made up the fire and drew the curtains (just as those housemaids were doing over the way), and left the tea-urn singing. Her tea urn! (A hard gulp of tears arose in her throat.) She remembered so well the first time she had seen it. It was in a Chelsea shop, sedate and comely against a background of old shawls, lace, china, and mahogany. She had coveted at once its silvery roundness, the little ring-holding lions' mouths at its sides, the green-stained bone at the tap. She had known at once that she should enjoy making her tea with the help of it, and her husband had bought it for her. Ah! there was

a wonderful joyousness about everything in those days. It was silly to cry for a tea-urn, but all the same it was the little things, the things that ought not to count, that tormented you when you hadn't them. One could not go on pretending all one's life that a mere roof over one's head was a thing to be thankful for. She jerked her foot pettishly.

The fire had sunk down in the grate, but she had no will to rise and put coal on it. Let it go out. It would only be another pebble on her mountain of discomfort. It did not matter. Here nothing mattered. One could sit for hours in the same place without any fear of people "talking," of giving an impression that something was "wrong."

Her thoughts wandered to the street again. Would none of them look up, those passing people, and see the dark-eyed woman who sat so still there in the window? Her isolation felt colder than the glass. If they would but look they might guess at her story; but, no, they hurried by, self-absorbed, unheeding. They had no time as she had to brood and speculate. Ah, why should they? It was all very old and stale. Even her friends had probably forgotten her. Did they ever mention her name? A year ago it had made piquant sauce for many a stodgy conversation; but nobody could go on being

shocked for ever. Like love (she thought bitterly, but enjoying the contemptuous shape the thought gave to her mouth) one could not keep it up. If they were not shocked, she knew that they were not interested; then why should they speak of her? She was lost, out of sight, gone headlong as a stone into a well. A hope strained within her that sometimes they might at least abuse her. Did the dead feel so?

She shivered lightly, and then a pink flush sprang into her cheeks. Oh, those old times! The intrigue, the excitement, the letters, the stealthy walks in the park! Those mornings when everything she saw seemed full of a hidden meaning, a divine elation. A secret! Most satisfying treasure in the world. It was her prize of prizes. How she had gone about hugging herself! She could picture herself now, rising up from tea-parties, from luncheons, the "Must you really go?" of her hostess and her own sweetly resolute "Yes, really," with a roll of the eyes that implied miracles. And then the furtive journeying, the side streets, the bland word of explanation for chance encounters, the steep staircase, the opening door, the strong arms to draw her inside it, her murmured "Just for a minute, a little minute," and at last the warm darkness, the dear intimacy of his room,

his little white panelled room—where she was now!

She moved one hand in deprecating gesture. Could such a thing be possible? The flush faded from her face. She had asked for stolen kisses and they gave her a divorce suit. Her husband had been so ready to get rid of her. She had shown him only her bored, discontented side after the first happy days, so how could he love her? He had given her everything she had asked for, including her freedom. Ah, but she had not wanted that. He should have refused her. That would have kept some colour, some interest in life. Harsh finger-marks upon one's arm, staccato curses, breath that hissed in the nose, these at any rate would have been interesting. Even if he longed for her a little still, what a triumphant haven her panelled room would be. But to be cast off, to be let pack and go, bag and baggage (or, at least, a little of the baggage), out of his house and his life and his thoughts! To have gone without leaving even a regret behind—it was humiliating. Worse, it was flat.

And now if she were not careful it would all happen over again. Not yet, not for a long time perhaps, for her lover was still wholly her lover, but some day, some sudden day might not he, too,

tire of her unrest, her peevishness? Already, she knew, her caprices bothered him. He wanted to take her to his friends, to theatres, picture galleries, concerts. To make plain and permanent their relation. But she shrank from reminders of her former world. She did not, in very truth, much care to be seen about with him. She could not endure the defeat of going to the pit, where formerly her place had been the stalls, of a gown less fashionable, of a tell-tale, unradiant face.

Nerves, he called it, nerves, nerves, nerves. He would lose patience—some day. Horrors were outside in the darkness and confronted her. She had always been an inexpert fool. Where were her daring, her high spirits, her grace, her sharp tongue? She must keep them and him.

Instinctively she made a movement to get up and mend the fire; but she checked herself and sank back into inaction. She must not be servile. After all, perhaps, it would not be he who would tire first.

She gave a stiff little yawn. To have given up everything for love, that was magnificent, but to have to keep on doing it, it was always against this frigid monotony that she had struggled. She would not let her thoughts be monotonous, anyhow. It was a principle. A little snap and sparkle

came into her eyes. She turned her back to the window and leaned her head more comfortably. She was not heroic, perhaps, not so like Iseult and Guinevere as she had fancied; but what could she do? If she had been born a light woman she would have to endure it. It was no use quarrelling with fate. She gave her shoulder-blades the smallest possible shrug. Already she felt happier. The future had several possibilities left. She reviewed them for a moment. A smile came upon her lips and stayed there. Perhaps, after all, the leaves would be green again, the air golden.

Far down in the house she heard the thud of a closing door. Sitting quite still she listened to the eager step mounting the stairs.

HÉLAS!

Ah! little tree, that shone in May
With glistening leaves and blossoms gay,
How show you now the bitter air
Of time has stripped your branches bare?

You that I loved and praised as one
That seemed a nursling of the sun—
What the bleak soil, what harsh wind blew,
Thus to deform and wither you?

Apparelled in the robe of Spring,
You bloomed so fresh and fine a thing;
Was that most joyous canopy
But a disguise, my little tree?

I loved the blossoms and the green,
The coloured, carved, intricate screen:
Enchanted by the sight of them,
How should I mark the crooked stem?

HUNTING SONG

The hunt is up, the hunt is up,
It sounds from hill to hill,
It pierces to the secret place
Where we are lying still,
And one of us the quarry is,
And one of us must go
When through the arches of the wood
We hear the dread horn blow.

A huntsman bold is Master Death,
And reckless does he ride,
And terror's hounds with bleeding fangs
Go baying at his side.
And will it be a milk-white doe
Or little dappled fawn,
Or will it be an antlered stag
Must face the icy dawn?

Or will it be a golden fox
Must leap from out his lair,
Or where the trailing shadows pass
A merry romping hare?

The hunt is up, the horn is loud
By plain and covert side,
And one must run alone, alone,
When Death abroad does ride.

But idle 'tis to crouch in fear,
Since Death will find you out.
Then up and hold your head erect
And pace the wood about,
And swim the stream and leap the wall
And race the starry mead,
Nor feel the bright teeth in your flank
Till they be there indeed.

For in the secret hearts of men
Are peace and joy at one,
There is a pleasant land where stalks
No darkness in the sun,
And through the arches of the wood
Do break like silver foam
Young laughter and the noise of flutes
And voices singing home.

THE INTRUDER

He was tall and very thin and he stooped a little. About his mouth a nervous smile flickered continually. It gave him an appearance of restlessness, and his hands, too, were restless. That was since his smoking had been stopped. It was only for a time, of course, and of course it was worth while to be careful; but it left him ill at ease. To be without a cigarette added to the strangeness of walking by the edge of a lake in bright sunshine, while at home they were putting up umbrellas and shivering in the north-east wind. He was lucky to be out of it, wasn't he? He wished, though, that he could have had another chap with him, not a miserable specimen like himself, but someone big and strong and to be relied on, someone who did not have to stop and rest every fifty yards, someone who didn't scan his face in the glass every morning as if he expected to see—what was it he expected to see there?

The young man turned his thoughts abruptly

from the question. He leaned his elbows on the balustrade and watched the swans moving on the water. How much at ease they were, and how untroubled! His fingers journeyed mechanically to his breast pocket, and then, as he remembered that there were no cigarettes in it, withdrew and fell to his side. He resumed his walk under the chestnut trees.

After all, the risk was very slight. He did not feel the smallest stir of anxiety about himself. There was no reason why he should not live for fifty years, the doctors had told him that, if he took proper care of himself. Well, he was taking care. Why should he be anxious? One gave—that was it?—a year or two of one's life to getting well, after that one might scale the Himalayas. What idiotic phrases the doctors had used! He had not the least desire to scale the Himalayas. But he should like to be out in a boat again in a choppy sea, where the salt stung your eyes and the wind took your breath away, and not crawling everlastingly between a wall of hills and a slopping puddle of lake-water.

He sat down on a seat and watched the sun beginning to set. The lake looked like silk. He thought again of his imaginary companion. It would be pleasant to hear him say, "You know,

old man, you're simply walking me off my feet. Let's sit down for a bit." Was he too hopeful? Optimism was part of the disease he had always heard. He supposed he ought to dread it like hæmorrhage. The sun disappeared and the hills became lead-coloured. It was time to go to his hotel and eat his dinner. "Big meals, plenty of good fresh air"—as he ate his thoughts grew lively again. After all, if he were really a "malade," he would never have been admitted to this select pension. They had a printed postscript on the tariff to that effect. He exaggerated, he frightened himself, he ought to keep remembering that the risk was very small. He felt elated. He longed for gaiety, for the hum of crowds. He decided that he would go to the Kursaal.

"Will the weather keep fine, do you think?" he asked the concierge.

"Impossible to say, Monsieur," was the answer. But the young man would not let his mood be shattered. He waved his hat merrily. How pretty the town was with its lights. They sent tinsel streams of gold and silver down into the smooth depths of the lake, and the surrounding hills had crowns of light upon them, and the carriages of the funicular, moving through the darkness, were like little golden mice. The air was

loaded with the scents of lilac and wistaria. He passed through the swing doors into the Kursaal. A hubbub of sounds rushed to meet him, a medley of fiddles, of voices, of feet ringing on the paved floor, of clapping hands from the music hall. At once, in the throng, his self-confidence began to fade from him. He stood at the top of the steps uncertain which way to turn. He moved hesitatingly to the "Jeu de Bal." Round the doorway stood a crowd of eager spectators, townsmen forbidden by a fatherly council to take part in the sport, gazing in silent fascination while their visitors were corrupted inside. The young man elbowed a way through them.

"Le Dix," snarled the man with the ball. The croupier manipulated his silver rake. No one was smiling. An old woman with many bracelets added a franc to her increasing store. It was rather a grim game.

The young man wriggled himself into the front row of those standing at the table. Every seat was occupied. He pulled out a franc and tossed it on to the space marked 5. The ball ran round and round. The silver coins had an exposed and naked air upon the dark green cloth. "Rien de plus," cried the nasal voice. The ball ran slower and slower. The people round the table watched it

as cats watch birds. It began to waver, it swung across, it rolled back, it rocked from pocket to pocket. The silence was keen.

"Le Six," came the harsh cry.

The silver rake clawed the young man's franc into the croupier's heap. The young man threw down another. The ball ran round and round. The silence settled. He was not exactly gay. Still, he was out for a merry evening. Had he not waved his hat to the concierge? He lost seven francs. On the whole, he was glad that he did not win. Good luck there would have been frightening. He preferred to have his fortune in another way. He thought he would try for amusement in the music hall.

It was quite full when he went in, so he stood for awhile looking at the lighted stage. A man with a tall hat on his head was doing a burlesque dance. As his feet battered on the boards his face grimaced comically.

"La Gioconda," he cried, folding his arms and grinning, "toujours la sourire"; or "Le Roi d'Espagne"—he turned sideways, jutting out his lower lip in an ugly fashion. The audience applauded him. The orchestra stopped playing for a moment. "Rahdy addle addle," went the feet on the boards.

"Pom, pom, pom," came in the orchestra again.

That was not very amusing either. Besides, the hall was very hot. The young man left it and went into the restaurant. There were still the pleasures of the Cinema and Winter Gardens untasted. Meanwhile, he ordered himself a "bock." While he waited for it he amused himself by watching the people.

Beside him in the corner four Frenchmen were playing cards. Sometimes they grew angry, sometimes they chaffed one another. Near the door some young Americans were taking drinks.

"I count that my stay here," one of them was saying, "will be worth a hundred dahllars a day to me. When a man has lived four years in a place people rackon he knows something about it. In Los Angeles——"

On the right a very pretty little girl was talking much too fast to two most unpretty little men.

Further along the wall a couple of decent mädchens were eating ices, protected by an ancient cavalier.

At the table opposite the young man's a woman in a black satin gown was sitting. She was without a hat, and her fair hair was rippled fashionably all over her head. Her hands, with their highly-polished nails, were clasped beneath her chin, and

she leant forward talking with fierce animation to a grey-haired man who seemed very still beside her. Her youthful face glistened with the rapidity of her speech. She laughed and chattered so much that she made herself cough. She had to lean back in her chair for a moment to recover herself.

Then, while the young man watched her, she did an extraordinary thing. She turned away from her companion, and with a furtive movement thrust her hand into the folds of the cloak that was thrown across the back of the chair. Still quietly and furtively she drew out a small black flask, which the young man supposed to be a bottle of smelling salts, and held it close to her face. He saw how deadly pale she was. Was she going to faint, he wondered? Then he saw a thing that made the restaurant, with its tables and crowd and noise, seem to rise up round him in a black vortex. From the young woman's mouth into the flask had crawled a something that was thick and white—a thing like a white snake.

The young man gripped the sides of his table. The room grew steady again. The young woman had restored the black flask to her pocket, and was talking, laughing, ridiculing, with her former furious gaiety. The young man watched her

with wretched eyes. His moist hand clasped the glass before him. He thought:

"I cannot drink this. I must go home."

Then he thought: "After all, it may happen to anyone at any minute. It is only a matter of years or days or hours, and what is the difference of those in the flood of time? There were a few things that I should have liked to do, but what do they matter? Children pretend to be heroes, and isn't that the happiest of all games? Doing things? Better to lie in bed with one's eyes shut—one will be as happy as the greatest man that ever lived. And, after all, happiness or unhappiness are all one. Whatever happens is over before one has time to taste it. It's no use being afraid. We all have to pass by the same way. Why," his eyes began to shine at his own valour, "the only way to enjoy life is to be careless of it. To hold it as lightly as a feather on one's palm."

He took a big drink of the beer. The woman in the black satin gown got up from her chair and with her companion disappeared in the throng of the corridor. The young man lost sight of them. Flushed and excited he sat sipping, gazing before him proudly. The risk was such a small one. No decent man was going to snivel about it. One had only to brace one's shoulders and it was gone. He

felt as he had felt an hour ago when he had waved his hat to the concierge.

All round him was the noise of voices, of fiddles, of promenading feet scraping the pavement, of corks being drawn, of glasses jingling upon plates, they merged about him into a great full-throated roll of sound, and then—outside in the corridor —someone had begun to cough. The fair-haired woman became individualised in the crowd, struggling to free herself, to get back to her seat. The young man did not wait for her return. He did not want to finish his beer. It was all very fine to talk about the common lot and to set your jaw squarely, but that chokiness, that horror, that loathsome little black flask——

He got upon his feet and grasped hurriedly for his hat. The doors of the Kursaal swung to in mercy behind him. The night air felt cold. Buttoning his jacket he walked, very upright, to the Hotel.

A BATHE ONE SUNDAY

The cornfields shone like glass,
Each ear a rainbow was,
The brambles were more full of bees
Than of purple blackberries,
On every emerald leaf there stood
A ladybird like a drop of blood,
And little flowers like mirrored sky
Rose up and flew as we came by.

No sound of wheel, no song of bird,
No grasshopper his fiddle stirred;
Almost the chewing of the cows
Sounded o'er seven fields—a house
With boarded windows, silent, shut,
Like a dead mole in a rut!

The air was full of thistledown,
Phantoms by the light wind blown,

In the grass the seeking stream
Made a brown translucent gleam:
Easily, it seemed, as they,
We, too, went upon our way.

What they sought, that sought we
Under many an arching tree,
Into shadows deep and cool
As a tawny fishing pool,
Over meadows on whose breast
Yellow sunshine lay at rest,
What they sought, that sought we—
Waiting splendour of the sea.

There at last before our feet
Loveliness is made complete,
Earth and sea a crystal cup
Rounded, perfect, brimming up!
Down the cliff, a golden stair,
To where the blessèd waters are,
Lipping, kissing the warm stones,
Lapping benedictions,
Sweet as music, clear as light,
Turquoise, silken, clinging, bright,
Now must we our bodies dress
In this garment's loveliness.

Barnes's bull is safe in shed
Far away and tethered,
Barnes and neighbours far away
On their knees do pray:
Standing, loud they sing, and yet
Whom they worship makes them sweat.

Whom we worship lets no eye
Come our bathing to espy,
Whom we worship lets the sea
In gentleness our playmate be,
Whom we worship, shuts us in
His blue garden without sin—
Praise we him who makes us part
Of the summer's heart.

OUT OF THE WIND

On the pier-head we were watching four little boats, tail-end of some irrelevant regatta, tacking round about a couple of buoys that showed crimson flags in the seaway. The air was sunny, the waves blue and slapping briskly, the wind came due east from a clear sky. Some of us were talking "strikes," some in tweed coats were talking "fishing," some, no doubt, were flirting enjoyably with the brown-cheeked maidens of the watering-place; but I, because an east wind makes me cower and seems to thrust cold fingers into the very marrow of my bones, slipped quietly shorewards to where, halfway down the pier, a glass screen was raised with seats on either side of it, a sturdy barrier between hostile weather and the comforts of the sunset. There I chose my seat and opened my paper and stretched my toes out to warm at the westering blaze. Then the first voice reached me. It was American and went with a level swing—"Eelectricity," it said, "is not a thing to play about with. My maid

used to stand one side of me and the rays got on to her by mistake, and, would you believe it, that girl was para-*lysed* for two hours? I had to fasten my dress myself. She got the full current. You can stand these things when you are ill, but you can't stand them when you are well. I had nine doctors and three nurses for an entire year——"

People passing made a resounding clatter on the wooden boards of the pier, that curious stammering tramp of feet stepping out of time together. As the noise became distant the voice penetrated to me again—swift, nasal, taking all hedges without altering its stride.

"They wanted to break my arm," it said; "that's your English method. I know, for I had all the big men seeing me, I was a very special case; the Paris doctor disagreed with them. 'Well, look here,' I said, 'something has to be done about this. I can't go about all my life with one arm fat and the other arm thin.' It looked so odd in evening dress. Then the Swiss spec-i-alist said he would take me over and cure me——"

I lost it.

"Eelectricity," it resumed, "is not a thing you can play about with. I had three nurses for over a year, two in the daytime and one at night. I

know what it is to be ill. When I take off my clothes I have a pattern all over me like a damask table-cloth. A sort of Iris pattern——"

It had gone again.

Clatter, clatter on the wooden floor and another voice, shrill and insistent of attention.

"I said as soon as I saw him, 'That dog isn't as fit as he should be, his eyes are dull and his nose is hot and dry——' "

Strophe and antistrophe. The American lady took up the tale.

"She was cleaning gloves with a big basin of petrol and I said, 'Get my bath ready,' and she turned round——"

"Oh, sulphur! But this morning when I felt his nose——"

"The whole thing flared up! And, would you believe it, that girl walked straight out of the room and shut the door! Oh, she lost her nerve, that was it, she lost her nerve——"

"He wagged his tail and I said, 'Feeling better, old fellow——' "

"I told them straight out: 'I can't go about like this all my life with one arm fat and the other arm thin——' "

"And his nose was so nice and cold and quite moist."

The second voice was getting the best of it. I had hoped to hear more about the Iris pattern. I did not care for the dog so much (even when he rejected his biscuit), and when I knew I was going to hear about the time he was sick in her bedroom I got up and moved to a seat lower down.

There were only two people near me, a middle-aged clergyman and an old lady in black. We were still more sheltered from the wind, and I settled myself to read again when I heard yet another voice. Such a voice! A maddening, infamous, diabolical voice. A flat voice, a voice with no ups and downs or quickenings or slurrings in it, a persistent tediously emphasising voice, a voice to make you scream and wring your hands and break things. It was inexorable, unescapable, without a period—"Of course when one has all the heavy luggage——," it was saying.

I looked round at her. She must have been seventy years old, and her black bonnet had tilted a little to one side. Her eyes were black, too, and her brows heavy, her nose was hooked, and her mouth increased beyond the intention of Nature by the way she drew the ends of it into the corners of her jaws, and kept them there. In her hand, covered with black kid gloves, she had

a black sunshade; it was closed, but she held it upright between her and the sunset, as if it were a loaded gun or the correcting rod of a dominie. Her calm was terrible.

"Of course, when one has had all the heavy luggage one cannot help feeling a little tired. But one does not expect to feel tired for a whole week even when one has had all the heavy luggage."

Every word had its weight. She did not hurry herself. She was stating, simply stating.

I looked at her companion. He was a florid man with a big face and rather thin hair, brushed back from a high forehead. His nose was shapely and crowned with eye-glasses, his calves were shapely too, and one day would possibly display themselves to great advantage in gaiters. His boots were thick and suggested a country parsonage, his jacket of alpaca was much crumpled at the back, his straw hat he held upon his knee, on his finger was a gold seal ring. A comely man, a comfortable man, why did he endure this persecution?

"Two pounds seven," the voice was saying for the third time; "if it had been two guineas I should have borne it patiently, but two pounds seven——"

Evidently some weekly bill at a boarding-house was in dispute.

"Well, it would have been two guineas," said the clergyman with a faint show of spirit, "if you hadn't come and turned me out."

"I turn you out? I did not turn you out. I simply said I preferred to have my usual room. At St. Clare's or St. Hilda's they would have taken you for thirty-five shillings, or at St. Ermyntrude's" (the saints, I perceived, have still some ascetic influences left). I missed his exclamation.

"St. Ermyntrude's is not at all a low place. Lots of University men go there. They would have taken you for two guineas. I should not have minded two guineas, but two pounds seven——"

Why did not he strangle her and throw the body into the sea? I should not have told. I flashed a sympathetic eye towards him. What bondage was this? What consideration on earth could keep him in such durance? Could they be married? Surely, if she was only a parent he must long ago have fled and slammed the door. But clearly she was his mother.

He had exclaimed a trifle testily.

She said: "It is done, yes, I know it is done, you need not tell me that. I know it is done, to my cost I know it is done, and not the first time either. Expenses and expenses, throwing money into a ditch ever since your University days——"

"I went to Oxford to please you."

"I am not talking about that. I am not complaining. I am saying that throwing money into a ditch——" She said it a great number of times. He leant back with folded arms and yawned elaborately. There was a silence.

Presently the voice addressed his profile.

"This is a very pleasant place."

It waited. "Yes," came the response after a minute.

"You meet a number of quite nice people here."

"Yes."

"You have met four or five University men here that you knew, haven't you?"

After the sour the sweet. She waited for him.

"Yes."

"This is a very pleasant place, isn't it?"

"Yes," a little quicker that time.

It was bullying. That was it. Bullying! It was making a small boy blubber and confess himself a fool. How could he suffer it? What tie other than a Heavenly forbearance—clearly there was none of earthly love—could so restrain him?

A bath chair crept past us. In it was what appeared to be a skeleton covered with old parchment. Rugs enveloped it. It wore a fur cap on

its head. On its hands, still as wooden things, gloves had been drawn. It was a horrid sight.

"There goes old Mr. Dodd," said the voice; "a wonderful old man. Must be ninety-six at least. His daughter was at school with me. The Dodds are very nice people. One used to meet a great many University men at their house."

(O careless boys in blazers, is this your ultimate end?)

And, as if some stealthy sense of the tragedy of life had touched her for a moment, a desire to gather roses while she might, she said to her son, almost with cordiality, as if he were a stranger—

"Would you like to go up to London for a few days and see——" (she named the worst stage play to be found in that city).

Here was his opportunity. Now for a crowded hour of glorious life. The bath chair was still menacingly in my eyes. "'Vita Brevis,' University man." I hung upon his words, I held my breath.

This is what he said:

"I think we have everything here. That *would* be throwing money away, if you like."

He settled himself more firmly upon his haunches. He had chosen.

The sun went behind a cloud.

Feeling "chilly," Mamma thought it was time they "were getting back." She would take his arm up the hill. One could not help feeling a little tired when one had had all the heavy luggage.

I watched them go. I hoped I should never see them again. I got up and walked in the wind, its vigour filled me with a glow, an exhilaration. Behind its tumult a round moon was rising, rose-coloured as a lamp-shade, in a sky of dimmest lavender. Somewhere a clock struck seven. Peace settled upon the waters like a cloud. But in my mind I could hear only that voice settling its blight upon the boarding-house dinner-table: "Surely it is not necessary for the soup to be quite cold?"

THE WORLD IS A BRIDGE

The world is a bridge, pass over it, but do not build upon it.

"Not to build a house on a Bridge?" said she,
"What place could be pleasanter to my mind?
'Twixt water and air, apart, aloof,
With four white towers and a silver roof,
A house that would sway at the push of the wind—
A house on a bridge my house shall be.

"Out of a window I shall lean
On a glorious banner wide outspread,
'Broidered by prodigal hands of old
With silk and jewels and threads of gold,
Green and blue and purple and red,
Fit for a queen and I a queen.

"There I shall sit in the rain or shine,
And watch the river or grey or blue,
While the maids as they sew will chatter and sing
Of a demoiselle and the son of a king,
But the fairest will only sing of you,
Friend, sweet friend, and lover of mine.

"And when the wind is warm from the south,
And river and sky are blue together,
A marvellous barque will sail our way
With a crew of the gallant, the bold, the gay,
And I'll know you by the peacock's feather,
And you'll know me by the rose in my mouth."

Ah, bridge from the unborn into the grave!
Ah, headlong flight of the shining hours!
Ah, Time, ah, river that flows and flows
Over the peacock and over the rose,
The silver roof and the snow-white towers,
What drownèd hopes you have!

ADVERSARIES

He was airing his socks in the dressing-room. The gas fire gilded his bare shins as he stood, a sock depending limply from either hand, his flannel shirt whisking a scant drapery about his lizard-like, obtrusive spine. At intervals he took a sip of pinkish liquid from a glass that was on the mantelpiece, and, tilting back his head, emitted a prolonged bubbling sound—he was gargling.

All his life he had been delicate; but his Uncle Bullivant, though handicapped like himself, had contrived to live to the number of eighty years chiefly, it was reported, through airing his socks, not only on the comparatively rare occasion of the return from the weekly wash, but every day. Though, as he sometimes murmured, "alas! not a strong man," there was yet sufficient tenacity of purpose in him to insist upon the daily performance of this—almost religious—rite. Presently he knew he should hear his wife come whirring up the stairs—she always mounted two steps at a time—and her knock at his door. This was her share

of the ritual. She was uneasy until he came down, partly, perhaps, because she wanted her breakfast. Whatever the cause, however, the note of anxiety in her voice was soothingly delicious to him as she asked:

"Are you all right?"

She was so seldom anxious.

"Exceptionally robust persons," his soft voice droned with pathetic fortitude in his mental ear, "are sometimes a trifle insensitive."

He stepped to one side of the fire, which was beginning to scorch him, and the socks now hung leg downwards.

He remembered his first meeting with his wife. He had every reason to remember it. She was the first woman who had ever attracted his attention. Other women went past him like the invisible air; but she had brought him, almost with a physical shock, to a realisation of her existence. Looking back upon it, and forward along its inevitable path also, he concluded that "attract" was not the right word to apply to his sensations at all; rather she had "affected" him. She had, as a matter of fact, affected him most unpleasantly. He remembered the occasion very well; it was at the Opera. Her "motif," had he only realised it, was made plain in the nervous ten minutes that he spent

after he reached his seat, in wondering who would occupy the empty place at his side, whether whoever it might be would come in time, and finally in the certainty that whoever it might be would *not*. He was in no mood for listening to music when, with the first pitch darkness and triumphant crash of chords from the orchestra, she had stumbled against him and dropped into the vacant chair. She kept surprisingly still after her effort, and seemed, from the tranquil warmth her nearness shed around him, to be listening with heart-whole enjoyment. It was unconscionable. For him the mood of concentration had to be difficultly built up, and it was now altogether broken. He fumed, he ground his teeth, he thought of biting things to say. The overture and act were interminable. His irritation, indeed, was in danger of expending itself, when, on drawing a hard breath through his nose in a final paroxysm, "Shsh!" came lightly from her. It was an infamy.

Illumination revealed his tormentor. She was a low-browed, dark-haired, bright-eyed creature, and the music had brought a glow into her cheeks. She flung back the cloak from her broad shoulders and surveyed the house. Was there no way of indicating his hatred and contempt? There was. He could not find his programme. His head, craned

and bobbing in a variety of exaggerated searchings, at length attracted her attention.

"Are you looking for something?" she asked him with a full glance from careless eyes.

"My programme"—his voice came strangled; "I think you are sitting on it."

"Oh, I'm sure I'm not."

He fought for self-control. "Excuse me, but I laid it on that chair. You came late——"

She was on her feet in a moment.

"Oh, please don't remind me of all my faults at once! I'm *so* sorry!" She was full of silly laughter. On her chair was the programme. Doubly convicted of gross behaviour, she might have humbled herself now; but she lacked such grace.

"If that *is* your programme, by the way," came her next remark, "what has become of *mine?* I had it in my hand when I sat down."

She rose again and searched elaborately. No second programme was to be found.

"You know, I think that must really be *my* programme I've given you." ("Given" was good.) "Do you mind if I look at it for a moment? I hadn't a chance, coming late——" There was her character in a nutshell. She acknowledged her fault and was not bowed down

by it. He had had to yield the fruit of his victory. Certainly he remembered the affair too well.

She had not remained long in quietness after that. Her roving eye had soon discerned friends across the balcony, and out she must plunge to talk to them. He found that he knew them too. In less than a minute they were all coming towards him, and his tormentor was laughing noisily while she proclaimed:

"Do introduce us! We've been having a back-street row about a programme."

How coarse was her phraseology! Even while they were engaged her voice had never pleased him. It put him in mind of the red-faced men that slap comrades on the back in the street with the adjuration, "Cheer up, old blighter! You're not dead yet." Her casual tone had the same offensive exuberance about it. He never heard it without a desire to draw his shoulder-blades together. Fortunately for her, she was unobservant of these things.

"Exceptionally strong people," the inward voice droned, "are seldom really observant of detail." All the same, he wished he could hear her voice and knock at that moment. He missed the morning observance; it was the happiest thing in his day.

He completed his dressing, and, having risen

two or three times on the balls of his feet "to rest the spine," applied his pince-nez to his nose, and went downstairs.

The clock in the hall struck ten as he went into the dining-room.

His wife was there. She was reading the paper in the full flood of air and sunlight from the open garden door.

"Hullo!" she said, not without friendliness, "I thought you were never coming. I went on." She indicated the scooped egg-shells that flanked her plate, the stained cup, the toast-crumbs—she had breakfasted without him. It was unprecedented.

"I have become accustomed to hearing your knock," he said very gently. "I fell into a reverie."

He cleared his throat with a sudden self-consciousness.

"I'm afraid the coffee is cold," said his wife, laying a large hand on either side of the coffee-pot. "Shall I ring for more?"

"If you please," he said, wrinkling his lips.

Her conduct, so lacking in refinement, so pregnant with reproachful criticism of himself, should not receive the encouragement of a counter-demonstration.

"What a delicious morning!" he said.

"It was, an hour ago. It's clouding over now."

He ate in silence.

Presently the open window aroused his notice. He could see the bright wind lift the little front locks of his wife's hair. He would appeal to her better nature. He shivered slightly and turned up the collar of his coat.

"Do you feel cold?" came her voice, solid and committal as a town crier's.

"Not at all. Nothing to speak of. A trifle. Pray do not close the garden door on my account."

It was closed menacingly without a slam. He wished she had slammed it. It would have been more like her. He turned down the collar of his coat. He would try again.

"Is there anything of interest in the paper this morning?"

She held it towards him at once.

"Nothing whatsoever," she said.

He folded the paper into a convenient shape with several sharp little taps. What a rummage she always made of it! Just as he was preparing to read a paragraph aloud to her, she got up and said:

"Thanks so much, but I've read that already. I'm going out."

She went towards the door. Half-way she paused and, turning, said with an air of sudden resolution:

"Do you intend to play this game for ever?"

"I beg your pardon?"

"I asked if you meant to play this game for ever?"

"What game?"

"This game, playing at being polite when we're hating each other really. I'm sick of it!"

"I'm sorry that you find my manners offensive."

"Offensive!" She grew suddenly noisy; she was bound, he supposed, sooner or later, to make a noise.

"Offensive!" she cried. "It's unspeakable, it's infamous, it's murderous, it's brutish! You're strangling and stifling me. I thought when I married you it'd be like looking after a child, helping and mothering you and cheering you up. But it's not, it's not. Do you know what it's like? It's like being tied to a spancelled goat, a sick, bleating, limping, spancelled goat. He won't jump and he won't let me jump. You're loathsome, you're horrible, you ought never to have been let loose on a healthy world! I am going to get some fresh air. Perhaps I'll never come back!"

She flung out of the room with amazing violence.

He was not quite sure that she caught his "Really, you seem a little odd in your manner this morning!"

"Brutish? Loathsome? Spancelled goat?" He repeated them to himself. She was absurd.

He finished—he felt he owed it to himself to finish—his breakfast. He went into his study. As usual, she had bothered him for the day.

"It's impossible, impossible," he said, as he always said. "I can't settle to anything."

This time, strangely, he found that such was indeed the case. Her threat kept ringing alternating peals in his brain. Did she mean it? Did she not mean it? Would she come back as if nothing had happened? Would she not come back? If not, was he glad or sorry? If so, was he sorry or glad? It bothered him all the morning.

At lunch-time she had not returned. The meal was laid soberly for one. He did not like to display his ignorance to the parlourmaid by asking when "the Mistress" was expected.

He returned to his study. Again the agonising doubts repeated themselves. Ding-dong, ding-dong. It was maddening. He opened the door and listened to the silence of the house. He wished

he could have heard her distant humming and have shut the door smartly on it with an air of being disturbed, as he had done the day before. He felt unaccountably restless. What ought he to do about her?

He found himself padding through the house. He looked out of the window and wished that he could see her coming, advancing up the street, flowers in her arm, looking towards the window and meeting his eyes, and at the identical moment stepping into the road to avoid walking under a ladder placed by painters against the wall. How he would have enjoyed now moving back with a frown into the room and saying to her quietly afterwards, "It would be better for you to chew your food properly than to avoid going under ladders."

A strange unaccustomed sense of isolation began to creep upon him. He thought he would take his tonic. He was not sure what he would do. It was most inconsiderate, "most inconsiderate"—he repeated it aloud—of her to go off in this sensational way. He would do his breathing exercises. He went into the dressing-room and locked the door.

It was nearly tea-time when his wife came home. The house seemed strangely quiet to her. She put

her sunshade into the hall stand with sudden furtiveness, as if she feared to make a noise. She was filled with vague apprehensions. What a bad-tempered beast she had been, flouncing out of the house like that! Had he been terribly hurt and lonely all by himself? After all, he had never been strong.

She should have come back sooner. The vague anxieties that tormented her in the mornings came crowding upon her. Was he all right? The house seemed much too still.

She tiptoed to the drawing-room. No sign of him there. The study then. She called softly. No answer. How he did keep things up! She tried with the thought to stifle the alarm within her breast. She raced upstairs. On the landing she called him. There was no reply. She knocked at the dressing-room door. Still only silence. She turned the handle. The door was locked. Trembling, she stood pressed close against the frame. She tried to quiet the drumming of her heart, to listen, only to listen! She held her breath.

Through the shut door at length a small strange sound came to her. A prolonged bubbling sound. He was gargling.

MISS DALY'S

THERE was a room I used to know,
Ever so many years ago,
In a draggled street of a shattered town;—
A room that was neither grey nor brown,
But all dismally warped and worn,
Broken and propped and frayed and torn,
A room to which the sun never came
Save a finger's touch on the window frame
Where grew nasturtiums coloured like flame.

Over the way was a public-house,
Where laymen and red-coats used to carouse,
(A hushed murmur that swelled to a roar
As each new-comer passed the swing door),
And at eleven each night to the chime
The potman would indicate closing time,
By their coat collars and his own knee,
Flinging them very riotously
Out of their splendour into the street,
And they, as soon as they found their feet,
Would turn and batter the door in heat.

But on warm nights while the town was still
I would sit and lean on the window-sill,
And feel the softly caressing air,
And smell the nasturtiums growing there,
(A peppery unforgettable smell),
And think the thoughts I could not tell,
And hear a tram pass the end of the road
With a hum like a bee with a honey load,
While round the lamps little moths together
Danced like snowflakes in gusty weather.
Those nights I'd jump at the noise of it
When I heard men clearing their throats to spit,
Where at a corner in a crowd
They talked in whispers and laughed out loud;—
But I felt the wind caress my face,
And the world still seemed a beautiful place—
The world still seemed a beautiful place.

Ah, nights of dreams and of youth's surprise
When all is strange to enchanted eyes;
And every echoing sound a barque
To bear rich cargo out of the dark,
Out of the shadows to one a-wait
With parted lips and heart elate;
When the crowded roofs and the sky above
Hide worlds of glory and worlds of love;

And night that circles to dawn mayhap
Will cast a miracle in your lap!
So did I sit and hear the hours
Fall sombrely from the city's towers,
Above the hidden nasturtium flowers.

And then Miss Daly would bring the lamp,
And a loaf of bread that was new and damp,
And a dish of jam that was sweet and rosy,
And a pot of tea in a dusty cosy,
And leave me at last to sup alone,
And to know that my dreams were done and done.

Could I, the now and present I,
The dim streets at night pass by,
And glancing through a window see
That slender self that once held me,
Sitting solitary there
With the lamplight on her hair,
Drinking tea and eating bread,
Bending o'er a book her head,
When she should have been in bed—

Should I press close to the pane
Eager to be young again,
Yearning for some hidden truth,
All impatient of my youth?

No; ah, no; ah, no! I'd cry,
"Hold your fortune ere it fly,
Speeding time your dreams will rive,
Dreaming is to be alive.
This your golden hour of play,
This your shining break of day,
This your April is and May."

Still into the dark I look,
Still must think some secret nook
Holds complete felicity,
And some day will give it me.
Foolish, nay, for well I know
Dreaming things can make them so.
All the wonders time has wrought
Wore the tender wings of thought.
Hush, the wings are everywhere
Filling the night-clouded air,
As they filled it long ago
In the room I used to know;
Filling it as once they came
At the open window frame,
Where the spiced nasturtiums grew
With their flowers of hidden flame,
Filling it with thoughts of you,
Dearer than can e'er come true.

ROMAUNT DE LA ROSE

GALATEA, it was, who told me.

She came into my room one bedtime, as girls do when they are staying in a house together. It seems to be the most prolific hour for confidences. Possibly dressing-gowns and unbound hair have something to do with it.

Not that there is anything particularly confidential about this story. It might have been told in any leisured place, on a slowly attained summit, or over muffins by the fire; but somehow the edge of a bed and Galatea the teller gives the perfection of appropriateness. Of course that is chiefly on account of Galatea. She is an entirely pleasant thing to look at in firelight and a kimono, and she aims her little shafts so accurately that they never glance aside and prick the hearer as others, less accomplished, do. She makes one feel slow-witted and amiable by contrast, so uncompromisingly does she view her fellows, and all the while she is charming in accent and gesture, and graceful as a bird. She accompanies her criticism too with a wide smile that belongs to her alone, a smile so

utterly devoid of considered malice, hidden thought, as to deserve, almost, the exclusively masculine epithet—grin.

We had not met for several months, and the tale of the summer's campaign was still far from completion, when I saw Galatea's mouth beginning to stretch sideways in the manner I have described.

"Oh, and I must tell you about Laïs," she said.

We both knew Laïs. I had even gone so far as to have been at school with her. She was a rather fat, soft-voiced girl in those days, with blue, dark-fringed eyes, and pitch-brown hair.

"Chubby as ever?" I inquired.

"Chubbier," said Galatea.

She grew thoughtful for a moment, then she said—

"It is a mystery to me what men can possibly see to attract them in a girl like that."

Speculations of that kind, however, have always bothered Galatea.

"We cannot all be perfection, can we?" I ask her nicely.

"We can at least approach it," she replies.

Encouraged, I go over and sit beside her.

This then is the story.

Galatea and Laïs were staying down at Lisworth

together for some charity theatricals. I can see the house clearly, the wide shadowed rooms, flecked here and there with yellow splashes of sunlight, I can all but hear the voices and the lisp of muslin frocks, the interjected laughter. Almost I can smell the tobacco. I picture the boys and girls, on the long sofas and Persian rugs, intent for a few brief mornings upon belts of straw and ivy buds, busy with coloured paper, reels of wire, scissors, laurel boughs, everybody in high spirits, eyes bright, lips carmine, the atmosphere of chaff and flirtatiousness that is called for other reasons Pastoral Plays.

It had been clear from the cast that there would be more than enough young men to go round.

"So that," as Galatea put it, "one did not have to over-exert oneself. Though anyhow," she added with a sigh, "undergraduates are getting too young for me."

(For a moment I feared that we were going to digress fatally among those favoured others who have made haste to be born in time, but Galatea had herself well in hand.)

Outside the cool house summer held the world entranced. On the downs the cornfields were steeped in it. In the garden the flowers stood subdued beside their pallid shadows. In the still

warmth the leaves were breathless, the plum ripened and did not fall. It was wonderful, a spell binding.

In the evenings after tea when rehearsals were over, Laïs, Galatea, and the others used to walk on the downs, "as luckily the weather was too hot for tennis."

Their walk led them by the old coach road above the chalk pit. I remember it well, a dyke with sides grass-coated and banked with green, that scars the smooth round shoulder of the down, and arrives in final extremity, I believe, at Portsmouth. By its side, but higher up the slope, for a little way accompanying it, as a foal might run beside a post-horse, is a much smaller track whitened by the feet of countless sheep, a narrow precipice-bordered path half circling a beech wood and vanishing at last in the delicious short turf of the hill-top.

"You know the little path?" said Galatea.

Above it the brambles have woven a wall for cautious skirting. Below it the briars are wreathed in dangerous profusion, in June a galaxy of shell-like blossoms, but in August only the leaves are left—and the thorns.

"Still rose bushes, even when the roses are dead, have a delicate peppery savour, a spice, haven't they?" I suggested.

Galatea hugged herself; but she refused to be hurried.

"Possibly Laïs thinks so," she said.

And Laïs—well, while the rest of the girls filed by nimbly, holding their muslin skirts close about their ankles, Laïs chose to walk very slowly on the edge of the green abyss. Laïs had perforce to linger. It was no place for hurrying, if two were to pass that way abreast, and Laïs had found a companion.

Galatea described him to me.

He was a fresh-complexioned young man, Cambridge, of course, with full-moon spectacles, and hair that shone like a new pair of tan leather boots. He wore grey flannel trousers and a dark blue coat. Bion, Galatea, called him, because he reminded her, she said, of the parsley that withers in the garden.

Long after they had reached the top of the hill and had seen the long evening shadows barring the fields and the island shimmering afloat in the haze, they would see Laïs and the young man coming quietly, he hatless with hands in pockets, she perhaps with a small branch in her hand. The others did not torment them. Galatea could lay a pretty hand on her heart and say that. They did not wait for them, or stay with them, or conspicuously avoid them, not from the Charity in-

deed that might be remembered upon Judgment Day, but simply because they were all at the time fully occupied with affairs of their own. "As a matter of fact we did not notice them."

I do not know exactly when it was that they did begin to notice. I can imagine with some accuracy, however, the arch eyes and puckering lips that emphasised the discovery. Galatea was at once impatient of it. She disliked the intrusion among her trivialities of what has been called a deeper, sweeter, but in her opinion was simply a less irradiant strain.

"Think of falling in love with a stray young man on a holiday! The prosiest thing——!"

(I tried not to sympathise with Laïs, for I knew that that would spoil the story for me.)

At first the affair did not seem serious. They were all doing the same thing more or less. It was not important that when Laïs went gathering myrtle to make the nymphs their garlands the brown-haired undergraduate went with her to carry the basket. It did not matter who sat by whose side for "Up Jenkins," or who went in the motor and who walked, but when it was a division, a subtraction without variation——!

At night, too, when Galatea went to sit on Laïs's bed (as she was now sitting on mine) to enumerate

the compliments for the day, annotated, as is fitting, with mocking laughter, Laïs would remain grave and dreamy, aloof, positively superior. It made things a little dull for Galatea to have no one to listen to her. Laïs had been her hope. The other girls were unable to laugh properly at any time, it seemed.

(I felt doubly flattered by her presence.)

"It was not that I minded her trailing him about with her," Galatea explained. "That was all right; but for her to be in the same mawkish condition!"

"But, my dear Galatea," I expostulated. "Even young women must fall in love some day!"

Galatea, however, would not allow that poor Bion was necessity. She had never dreamed that Laïs was anything but amused and interested. Very much amused and mildly interested. That, according to Galatea, is the only possible attitude.

It was the last evening at Lisworth that opened Galatea's eyes to reality, and several other pairs of eyes too, she feared, in a startling and unpleasant way.

"If it's scandal, Galatea," I admonished her, "it isn't fair to tempt me to listen to it."

"You precious humbug," said Galatea.

The play was over, it had been a great success,

and to celebrate the triumph they had a little dance, an informal affair, just with lanterns in the garden and ices in the conservatory. Galatea was sitting out some dances, in the hammock, "because it was the most comfortable seat," when one of the dancers came up, looking for his partner.

"Well, it isn't *me*, surely?" said Galatea, with bad grammar and a good conscience. ("For you know I think cutting dances rotten.")

No, it was Laïs he was looking for.

The dark garden swallowed him.

A different music floated from the drawing-room and another white shirt-front grew distinct in the gloom. ("I don't know why they should all have made for the hammock?" "Instinct," I said.)

"Have you seen Laïs anywhere?"

Galatea was presently consoling three shirt-fronts.

"And has anyone seen Bion?"

"Have they been missed in there?" Galatea indicated with her voice the lighted windows of the drawing-room. They supposed not yet, anyhow. Galatea decided to stay in the garden to keep Laïs in countenance when she did come back. She smoked several cigarettes to keep herself warm and——

"I dare say those boys thought I was staying there to flirt with them."

It was getting very late and Galatea was getting really anxious when a red spark and a ghostly shape beside it implied the approach of a couple over the grass.

"Hullo!" said Bion, "we've been up the downs to look at the moon. No end of a night up there. Clear as daylight."

He was most communicative.

Laïs murmured to Galatea, "Is it very late?"

"Not too frightfully," said the consoling one.

"I say, come with me, will you, Galatea?"

Scenting danger Galatea slipped an arm through hers and they walked into the house together. She noticed that Laïs held her gown close-twisted. They found their room without encounters.

Then Laïs revealed herself. She opened her hand and the gown, or what was left of it, fell round her. It was torn to ribbons, to shreds, to flitters, and her arms were lacerated, scratched, and bleeding till they "looked like the plan of a railway terminus."

"Good heavens, Laïs, what has happened? Have you been fighting with a wild cat?"

"You know the little path up the downs?" said Laïs.

Galatea knew it.

Laïs had fallen off it vertically, plumb through a rose-bush!

"We were an hour pulling the thorns out of her," said Galatea. "They were like quills upon the fretful porpentine."

"And what did Bion *do?*" she asked.

"Oh, he came and picked me up," said Laïs.

Galatea could come at no earlier doing. Poor Laïs on the narrow path!

"Bion thought I was killed," she said. "I felt myself falling and I put up my arms to save my face."

(Mercifully!)

She landed quite softly spread out upon the grass, and looking up—saw yards and yards of white stuff tangled inextricably among those detestable bushes. Detestable? But they saved her life all the same. She was distinctly plucky. In a little while she was smiling about it. Bion had thought she was killed!

"You know, Galatea," I said rather sternly, "if he had had his arm round her waist that wouldn't have happened."

But Galatea scorned me.

"Such a place to choose!" she said.

KINSALE

Sing of a day of splendour,
A day that you and I
Lay on a mighty headland
Between the sea and sky;
Soft on the heather,
On the warm hill-side,
In the shining weather,
Lay and talked together,
Talked and laughed and watched the sea;—
Where gulls with faint sad voices,
Cries of battle in a dream,
Hovered by the mackerel gleam,
And great porpoises went rolling,
Sleek and black in the blue tide.
Blue and blue,
Gold and white,
I and you
In the floods of light
On the heather lolling;—

Clouds sailing high,
Brisk waves splashing,
Jewelled wings
Of wild bees flashing,
You and I
Glad and gay as the summer sea,
The open sea!
How my heart rejoices,
How my heart sings,
To remember the faint voices,
The white wings!

EVENING MUSIC

Under the alder trees
With their gold tassels,
Under the slender trees
There I build castles.

Silver the alder trees
Silently sway,
Where the still water is
Quiet and grey.

Quiet the alder trees,
Hush'd the winds pass,
Gold, from the silver trees,
Powders the grass.

Under the alder trees
In the still evening,
Under the slender trees
There I walk dreaming.

THE ATTIC ROOM

My room is high above the trees,
The ash leaves brush my window-sill,
The breezes blow, the curtains fill
Like sails of ships upon the seas.

So out I sail across the boughs,
Nor fear the dread abyss below,
Where merry sparrows, to and fro,
Flutter and chirp and break their vows.

I see beyond the earth's far rim
The round sun sinking in the West,
The winds of twilight are at rest,
And all the whispering world grows dim.

I, and the stars, and none beside
To journey till the dawn grows red,
World upon world above my head
Wheeling through space with tireless stride.

And watching them no course I keep
Nor care which way my vessel goes,
Forward or back, who cares? who knows?
Not I, for I am fast asleep.

VENGEANCE.

All her life, it seemed to her, she had been dogged by small misfortunes.

She was one of those pale women with long noses and grey eyes set close together at the top of them. Her fair hair was not really thin, but she had never been able to make it look pretty. She still wore it woven into the sort of knob that had been fashionable when she first left school. She had tried since, many times, to alter it; but it had always refused to "go," or else her husband had ridiculed. That was one of the misfortunes. Other women were able to slide from one way of hairdressing into another, casually, becomingly, and without causing remark. Often when her arm, tired with long brushing, had fallen aching to her side, she had clenched her teeth in a very fury of disappointment.

Then there were other things.

At dinner parties the woman seated at her partner's left contrived always to be talkative and

merry. She tried to persuade herself that she had a finer dignity and reserve, but that did not really console her for having to sit quietly, an island of silence in the midst of the chatter, while on either side of her she was aware of white collar and burnished head, red ear and thick jaw, munching. She seemed never to see the men's faces at all except when they leant back to laugh, and they never laughed with her.

Even servants showed a want of consideration, in spite of her expensive gowns. It was always the jelly that was handed to her first or the fruit salad, never the creamy thing, and she had to help herself without demur. She loathed, she so envied, the woman further down the table who was saying composedly, "I'll have cream, please." She knew that if *she* sent a dish away she would get nothing, or some stupid accident would happen to irritate everybody. Once she had been the first to assail an ice-pudding, and it had ended in her lap! There was also the question of coffee-cups. The other women's disappeared inconspicuously. Hers remained awkwardly in her hand, and she never had the courage to rise and put it down. Better to give up taking coffee altogether.

Her aloofness oppressed her. Her funny story, if she ever dared to begin one, was cut short ere its

prime by some provoking incident;—the fire-irons would fall into the grate, or the dog imagine rats in the waste-paper basket;—the door would open to admit a telegram or the men up from dinner. Something—anything. Nobody listened to her. Sometimes she found herself wondering if she really did exist at all. Certainly she did not exist in other people's memories or imaginations. Her husband, a big florid man, jocular, bald, and well-liked, was not important enough for her to be favoured for his sake. His name, however, was familiar to everyone; yet she, who also bore it, had often to say it twice before it was understood, and it sounded a noisy, ridiculous name when it was spoken without confidence. Even her hostess once had stopped half-way through an introduction, and tightening a grip upon her arm, had said:

"My dear, forgive me, but what is your name?" and then, "Do you know, dear, I sometimes cannot even remember my own!"

She distrusted that explanation. No wonder she was diffident.

At parties she could be seen on the outskirts of every group, just beyond the orbit of distinguished guest, or game, or gossip, a little smile hanging its transparent veil over the pathos of her mouth. That was long ago. She is not like that now.

It was some such series of small things, trifles, insignificant humiliations, and defeats, that accumulated a flood of stinging bitterness within her, and made out of what had originally been amiable, if vague, an aggressive and shattering self-assertion. Philip Montmorency Brown it was who precipitated the crisis. Philip, as you know, has been exceptionally fortunate. He used to be an interesting, dreamy, cadaverous boy, with a resonant voice, and eyes like a pheasant's. He never had been able to remember people unless they were famous or likely to be of use to him. Invariably he failed to remember this pale, long-nosed lady with the pathetic smile, and she felt no resentment, she acquiesced, she did not desire to be scuffling with Fate, for, oh, a long, long while. Philip, however, was too much even for her. This is what happened.

It was at a party near Campden Hill that they had the famous encounter. She had been ignored all the evening by everyone, of course, and by none more completely, radically, and thoroughly than by Philip Montmorency Brown. All the same, it had been a nice party, and she had enjoyed it in a practical, if not very exuberant way. The refreshments were good; she had found a chair early, and managed to retain it (to be left "standing about" was the epitome of horrors), and she had seen how

kind everyone was to Philip Montmorency, and what a delightful time he had had. She saw, too, how it had pleased him, and how his face wore an expression as satisfied as a pug-dog's after a meal.

When she and her husband had said good-bye, and she was putting on her cloak in the hall, Philip Montmorency came out from the drawing-room, where he also had been making his adieus, and came bouncing down the stairs humming a little tune to himself, as if he had been bored up there and was happy to escape.

It was the tune that did it. The ingratitude! The scorn of fortune's bounty! The lack of vision! But she did not express it to herself as that. To her this was with suddenness merely a very conceited young man, a man who wore his vanity upon his sleeve, and with an unwavering resolve she swooped upon him.

"You don't remember me," she said, "but it's so long since I saw you that I feel like an old friend of the family."

Philip, who was groping for his overcoat among the pile on a table, lifted his auburn head, and looked at her with his sweet and winning smile, he expected one of the kindly phrases that strewed his path like flowers. Standing so in the light, he had

the air of a sleek Apollo. She surveyed him calmly, and finished her remark.

"You are fatter," she said, "and your hair is not so red as it used to be."

"Why?" said Philip Montmorency. "Why?"

She left him gaping.

Her husband was thunderstruck.

"What possessed you?" he asked, as the taxicab moved away with them.

"He'll remember me next time," she said, very straight-lipped and upright.

"Remember you! I should think so! He'll get under the table!"

That was the striking of the hour. It became for all time an example of her method. She is not ignored now, she is avoided; and she finds it no lonelier, and much more amusing.

THE MOWER

The rooks travelled home,
The milch cows went lowing,
And down in the meadow
An old man was mowing.

His shirt rank with sweat,
His neck stained with grime;
But he moved like the cadence
And sweetness of rhyme.

He moved like the heavy-winged
Rooks, the slow cows,
He moved like the vane
On the roof of the house.

The foam of the daisies
Was spread like a sea,
The spikes of red sorrel
Came up past his knee.

The poppies, the clover,
The buttercups gold—
A man that was dirty
And twisted and old—

But again and again
Like an eddy he was,
He moved like the wind
In his own tasselled grass.

WORTH THE MONEY.

When he first caught sight of her she was standing among the palms at the edge of the gallery and trying, with both hands pressed upon the rail, to look into the restaurant below. Her dainty figure, and the little rosette of flowers under the brim of her hat, enchained his eyes, as the strains of the band, a-swim on a popular valse tune, entranced his ears. He was lapped in a warm sea of well-being.

It was seldom that he spent eighteenpence on a luncheon. They gave him a sense of luxurious indulgence, these rare occasions when the bottle-glass doors of Soho swung behind him. He did not often dare such extravagances.

"But after all," he would argue with a "pal," "what do all your scrapings amount to? Not more than nine-three saved in a week."

Life was a tight fit whatever way you went about it. A man ought to burst out now and then; it did him good. Besides, he'd tried the *à la carte*, and you didn't save anything by it. Might just

as well take the whole thing through. He knew them all—Potage, Raie au beurre noire, cotelette de veau, crême au chocolat—it was as good as travelling on the continent. One-and-six and a twopenny tip, and then for the "metch" at The Oval. It was worth the money.

The girl, leaning now her elbows on the rail in contemplation of the scene below, was an added luxury.

"Pretty cool 'chep,' keep a girl like that waiting," he thought. He eyed her admiringly.

She glanced petulantly at her watch.

"She don't half like it," he thought.

She was obviously restless.

From time to time she craned far over, to see the entrance door. Returning to her easier pose from one of these gymnastics, her eyes met his, and she frowned slightly.

He was embarrassed at once. "Looks like the real thing," he thought. He tried to take no notice of her.

"Don't want her coming after me," he encouraged himself. He propped up his paper and ate rapidly. When he looked up again he thought at first that she was gone. His eyes soon found her, however. She had left the railing and appeared to be seeking a seat. She was clearly

ill at ease. Again his eyes met hers, and this time she neither frowned nor looked away; instead, to his consternation, she came straight towards him.

"Do you mind if I sit here?" she said, sliding into the chair opposite his.

"Not at all. Pray take a seat. Delighted," he gabbled in his astonishment.

Sitting half-turned away from him, she continued to survey the room. An officious waiter holding a wine list turned towards them. Taking the menu card from beside the mustard-pot, he thrust it before her. What did Madame choose?

"Thank you, but I am waiting for somebody," said the girl with dignity.

The waiter withdrew.

A silence settled upon the table. The young man wondered if he might pick his teeth. He decided not.

She drummed fingers on the cloth. At last he ventured a remark—

"Not chused to waiting about, I suppose?" he asked.

She glanced near him.

"No, indeed," she said in a smooth little voice.

"I should think not," he agreed quickly, too quickly.

The conversation promised to die again.

"I'm waiting for my husband," she said suddenly.

"No! Reelly!" cried the young man. He had not thought of her as having a husband.

"You don't suppose, do you," said the girl, with an air of amused indignation, "that I should wait for anyone else?"

The young man was suffused with blushes. He had not anticipated that his speculations about her would thus accumulate and explode as it were upon his head.

"Why, I hardly——" he began. "I beg your pardon. I'm sure I never——"

But she was not offended. She laughed.

"I meant that you didn't suppose I should let anyone but my husband keep me waiting, did you?"

He laughed, too.

"Rather not," he said enthusiastically.

"He isn't usually as late as this," the girl went on. "I was a tiny bit late myself. I'm afraid he may have been and gone away again."

"Oh, come," said the young man, earnestly concerned, "he wouldn't do a thing like that."

"He might," said the girl. "If I'd twopence," she added unexpectedly, "I'd ring him up and find out." She became suddenly expansive. "It's

the stupidest thing. I've lost my purse. When I got out of the 'bus, I missed it. I don't know whether it was snatched or simply that I dropped it. It's too ridiculous. I made sure my husband would be here when I arrived. I can't think what can have kept him. If I weren't so anxious, I'd be glad he was late. His lateness against my purse, you know. It makes it fairer. But really, it's too tiresome," she drummed her fingers. "I haven't a penny. I'm helpless."

"Look 'ere," said the young man, "don't you worry. I should be only too 'appy to advance you the twopence if it'd be of any assistance to you."

"Oh, thank you," said the girl warmly; "but I couldn't dream of letting you."

"Only too 'appy to oblige you in any way."

"Oh, but I mustn't." Her fluttering hesitancy was pretty to behold.

"Don't be proud," he admonished her. "It won't make no difference to me, reelly. You can pay it back when you like."

She shook her head.

The waiter hovering with his bill reminded him of the time.

"Hullo," he said, "I'll be late for the 'metch' if I don't look out. I must be getting on."

He unhooked his threadbare overcoat from the

stand and struggled into it. Then he came back to where she sat.

"I say," he said, "what are you going to do?"

"Oh, I'll just have to sit and feel hungry," she said.

He couldn't bear that—the pangs of hunger rending that dainty frame while he had gorged himself! He would "chuck" the "metch."

He took out his only silver coin (he had no gold ones) and laid it upon the table.

"Look here," he said, "take two bob. Then you can 'phone and 'ave your lunch, and a cup of cawffee and what you like. *Do*."

He pushed it towards her.

"Oh, I couldn't," exclaimed the girl; "it wouldn't be fair."

"That's all right," said the young man. "I'll never miss it."

"Oh, but I'll send it back to you!" her fingers touched the coin.

"That's all right," said the young man. "Any time you're passing."

"Thank you most awfully," said the girl.

"You're welcome," said the young man. "You're welcome, straight, you are."

He hesitated for a moment; then leant across the table and said, in a burst of confidence—

"I'd rather 'ave talked to you than 'ave gone to the Oval any day. Straight I would."

His eyes met hers. At the same moment he became aware of a big man with a menacing scowl who was threading a path towards them among the tables. The young man became upright. He had decided to wait no longer. "Good afternoon," he said.

He fitted his bowler hat on and made for the stairs. He heard her hailing the new-comer.

"I've been waiting hours for you," she cried. "I've had nothing to eat. How could you be so late? I lost my purse coming here, and I've had such a miserable time." (The young man had disappeared round a bend of the stairs.)—"Oh, and I've borrowed two shillings from an absolute stranger!"

"The deuce you have," said her husband, sitting down in the young man's chair. "You ought to be a company promoter!"

"And I don't know his name and address. I forgot to ask him. Do run after him, quick, and give him his two shillings back."

"I'm damned if I do," said her husband. "I want my lunch."

He picked up the menu card, and the waiter advanced with the wine-list.

TO M. M. R.

There stands a willow by a stream
  In pensive green and silver grace,
Quiet she stands, as in a dream;
  But when the breezes dart and chase
The ripples, and the rushes quiver,
  She stoops and kisses her own face
Reflected in the flowing river.

So when you turn your eyes our way,
  Moved by a little thoughtful wind,
You see about you every day
  The dawnlit Eden of your mind
Where many lovely shadows pass,
  Since you in us your beauty find:
The world is but your looking-glass.

THE DAISY FIELD

A FIELD of daisies white and green,
The fairest thing my eyes have seen,
A field of daisies that the sun
In silence lays his lips upon,
It is a pleasant place to play
From dawn till dark on a summer's day,
Till the mower with a frown
Comes and cuts the daisies down.

O happy daisies! Men have sung
A thousand years your fields among,
Have looked and loved and longed and dared
While you their joys and secrets shared,
Nor you nor they have turned to see
The mower toiling ceaselessly!

Come, my beloved, it is day,
The mower still is far away,

Fear not; but though we wander far
To lands where many wonders are,
To lands that only lovers see,
The mower strides as fast as we.

Fear not! For we shall dreaming lie
'Neath daisies, 'neath a summer sky,
Hearing Life's murmur overhead
(Who knows what is it, to be dead?)
Talking of all that we have seen
Up in the world of white and green,
And maybe with a bated breath
Saying, "'Tis Life we fear, not Death."

GETTING THE SACK

She was wearing a pink silk hat—unvarying formula of feminine weakness—and the pointed chin that I caught sight of beneath it proffered no contrary evidence of strength. I judged from her general air that she was pretty—pretty and dark. Her companion, seated opposite to her, with elbows resting on the little table, was a bulky man, with promise of exceptional corpulence in the strained back of his prosperous city coat. On his forehead he wore a curl, a curl that might have been beautiful in another place, a curl like an upturned shell; but which made, as it was, an entirely ludicrous top-knot for his cropped head and bulging neck. He was not what one would call attractive.

So much I took note of in the necessarily rather conscious stare with which one surveys a tea-shop in search of a seat.

My choice was finally of the table next to theirs, for it was the only vacant one beside a wall, and as

I moved to my place, the wearer of the pink hat looked up for a moment, and I perceived that she was crying.

It gave me a feeling of keen discomfort to see a grown-up person crying in public—crying, therefore, with a grief that had gone beyond control. I was glad for her that she had a friend. A man so fat as that, I thought, cannot but be kind. I felt that it was in his power to comfort her.

"What am I to do?" she was saying. "What am I to do?" Her voice was husky with tears. Through the light clatter of the tea-shop I heard the voice of her friend, subdued also, and very steady.

"You should have done what I told you," he said.

"But it was impossible. I assure you, it was impossible." There was something agonised in the stifled voice.

"You could have come if you had wanted to," he said.

I glanced over my shoulder for another look at him. The need for secrecy—or at least for quietness—seemed to have taken the responding emotion from his voice. Anyhow, I missed the consoling note. I wondered what the relationship was between them. Clearly the bond was a close

one; I could tell that from the way he leaned on his elbows. He seemed to be putting all his weight, physical as well as mental, into what he had to say to her. He was certainly in grave earnest. Probably, I thought, he has always loved her and she seeks him, when things go badly with her, for advice, and the courage to go on living that, when life is hateful, only admiration can give. Perhaps, with his strength, he does not need to make his emotion articulate. Perhaps the rock-likeness of him is consolation in itself. All the same, I wished he would be a trifle agitated, grip her hands and say, "Don't cry, my darling, for God's sake don't cry." I fancied she would be glad of the outburst too. I waited for it hopefully.

The gentle sniffing went on.

"You don't know what a position you're placing me in. You don't know what it means to me."

"You should have thought of that before."

It came to me, with an ugly shock, that I had been quite wrong. There was not a particular kindness about the man. There was, on the contrary, a something sinister and deadly in the enforced quiet of his voice.

"I suppose you know what will become of me? I've got to make a living somehow."

"That's none of my business."

"You don't want to give me a chance."

"That's not true."

"Yes, it is; yes, it is. (There was nothing combative in these contradictions, only the dreary repetition of a fact.) "You know I shan't be able to go on with my lessons now. You don't want me to get on. You don't care. You never did."

Still the quiet, incessant tears.

"Yes, I did. Didn't I pay for you?"

(A sniff.)

"Didn't I arrange everything?"

(A sniff.)

"Listen to me. I don't think you *will* get on, and for a very good reason."

"He said I had talent," came through the pocket-handkerchief.

"Talent!" He blew contemptuously. "That's not the point. If you want to get on, my girl, you've got to work. It doesn't matter what it is, music or dancing, it's just the same as business. If you're going to succeed you've got to stick at it. You've got to concentrate, see?"

"How can I concentrate when you keep wo-rrying me?"

"I've never worried you."

"You have wo-rried me," the word came

shakily. "Why last night" (she took the handkerchief from her face with a quavering animation) "there I was dressed nicely and looking nice and able to get on; but if I'd thought about you for a moment I couldn't have got on. I'd have gone to pieces. I couldn't have sung a note."

There came a pause, and I wondered if they were verging on a peace. Presently the man's voice resumed.

"You're not straight, are you?"

The level remark was as astonishing to me as it was meant to be insulting to her.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean what I say. You're not straight, are you?"

"I don't under-stand."

"Yes, you do. I'm telling you you're not straight."

I fancied there was satisfaction in the voice.

"What time did you get that telegram?"

"I've told you before, I got it at ten past six."

"That's funny. It was delivered at the house at ten past five."

"I didn't get it till six."

"You weren't in the house when it came, then."

"Yes, I was. I tell you I was dressing for dinner."

"Dressing for dinner at five o'clock! You're not straight, are you?"

He waited. She was crying softly into her handkerchief.

"I sent that message from the office round the corner. I saw the boy take it. Now do you understand?"

I understood, at any rate, if she did not. He had suspected and meant to catch her playing false. Very easily he had caught her. I fancied he had not been sorry.

"You left me at four-fifteen," he said. "That telegram asked you to meet me at seven. You didn't turn up."

"I tell you I didn't get it till six."

"You could have telephoned."

"I tell you——"

He cut her short. He was not interested. It was all one what she told him.

"Got any more tea?"

"There's no hot wa-ter."

He swung round in his chair and beckoned the waitress.

"Here, miss," he said, holding out the jug, "is the kettle boiling?"

His jauntiness was far more ruthless than an avalanche of oaths.

The waitress took the jug, grinning responsively. Apparently the man had a charm that I, somehow, had missed. I was sorry for the pink hat in the corner. There was so little subtlety or power of attack beneath it. I could not imagine an expression on the tear-smudged, oval face of greater intelligence than a smirk. I could picture her on that fatal day before yesterday tripping archly away from the fat man at four-fifteen, slipping into the nearest tube station to telephone:—

"Is that you, Ernie?"

"Don't be silly!"

"I've got an evening off. The old man's busy."

"Oh, you naughty boy!"

And so, ingenuously, it was all arranged, and away she had skipped to meet her other "gentleman friend."

And now the reckoning.

She was saying—

"I hope sincerely you'll never be placed in such a position. I hope not indeed."

How flat and inadequate the words were! The need of not raising her voice made them mincing and genteel. Every circumstance handicapped her, deepened her helplessness. Here she could not

even make a scene. The waitress returned with the hot water. I asked her, as she passed me, for my bill. I heard the fat man saying—

"I shall probably run down to Eastbourne for a few weeks."

All that the pink hat was missing!

She was pouring out his tea now in mute quiescence. She had made a poor fight and she must submit. The game was up. She had had but one weapon—the weapon of tears—and it had failed her. Possibly it was not the first time that the fat man had encountered it. And I thought to myself how even the most heckled wife alive would have rounded and snapped at him before the end of such an interview. Tears she might have shed, sodden she might have sat, but sooner or later she would have said—

"Stop talking about it, will you? I've had enough of it," or:

"Do you realise that you are behaving like a brute?" or she might have slammed the door (like Nora) and gone to call on friends.

But the pink hat could only sit and cry. I wished that some sudden shaft might spring into her mouth. Something novel, dangerous, and wild to pierce his strong indifference. Her tears were so much water on a drake's back.

Leaving the pay desk I stepped into the street, and as I stepped a rhyme recurred suggestively to my brain. It seemed to summarise the obverse of a very melancholy situation.

"I shoot the hippopotamus with bullets made of platinum,
Because if I use leaden uns his hide is sure to flatten 'um."

I wished that the lady in the pink hat could have tried platinum.

A FREED SPIRIT

Upward I sprang,
The earth shot from me like a stone,
Upward I flashed alone—
How the wind sang!
My feet together pressed,
My arms crossed on my breast,
A shining spear,
A quivering arrow from the bow of Death,
I drew exultant breath,
I knew no fear:
Flame in my heart and hair
I reached the upper air.

I saw the throng
Of those whose uniform is loveliness,
Beauty of wing and dress,
Beauty of song.
Through them I swiftly went,
My energy unspent,

Though there was one
Cried out to me, beseeching me to stay,
Scornful I took my way,
Hawk to the sun.
The Universe stretched out,
I faced it with a shout!

Oh, I was strong!
My body and my wings were as of steel;
No flagging did I feel
All space among:
The blue deeps length on length
Were challenge to my strength;
My pinions beat
Down the vast shadow distances of night,
And triumphed into light;—
Tireless and fleet
I meant to see all things,
Such strength was in my wings.

And then it came,
A star among the countless stars at last
That might not be o'erpast,
This world without a name—
'Twas on the verge of night,
I poised in my great flight,

And saw a moon
Rise honey-coloured in a purple sky
And watch so tenderly
The hills of June,
All night, all thro' the night, while the hills slept—
Down from my height I crept
And hid my face and wept.

THE SMALL DAUGHTER

God does not fail in anything,
The ring-dove's neck, the beetle's wing,
The buds that turn from green to gold,
The sunny perfumes of the spring,
The coloured patchwork of the wold,
The blue dusk dropping fold on fold,
And all talk talked and stories told
In the long evenings by the fire,
And strength and laughter and desire.

Dear, when you come to me and say
Do this, do that, I must obey,
Swift to interpret, to devise
With all the gladness that I may,
So can I face the trust that lies
Within your wide exacting eyes
(Your beautiful exacting eyes);
Mending and fashioning, I know
If you will have, it must be so.

Do not be over harsh with me
When (empty of all subtlety,
Stupid and ignorant and shy)
You find my small reality.
When on a sudden grown as high
And how much cleverer than I!
You put your games and nonsense by
And find me also questioning
And empty of all counselling.

Ah, turn your puzzled glances then
From the unresting ways of men,
From tangled right and tangled wrong
To where the brooks are loud with rain,
To where the birds are glad with song,
And with the world know you are young,
And with the ageing world be strong,
And unto God as faithful be
As in these days you are to me.

THE MULBERRY BUSH

I.

She will never forget the heady and all but uncontrollable feeling of relief that danced within her when Mr. Stanton Murray (since deceased), having pressed his wet moustache upon her cheek, and, in sequence, upon the legitimate cheeks of his five children (she was a mere visitor in his house), had lifted his bag from the carved chest in the hall, and with rain-coat flapping and gravel crunching beneath his feet, had taken his way to the railway station. Until his large, strong hand had swung open the gate and shut it again forcefully behind him, they held themselves in check, there was many a slip 'twixt cup and lip, quite apart from those that disfigured the breakfast cloth, and they did not permit themselves to forget the morning that he had returned unexpectedly for his umbrella. With the clang of the closing gate,

however, restraint went shrieking to the winds. The play-room rocked beneath the surge of small ecstatic Stanton Murrays. Whoever was in the swing swung until his toes recorded their prowess in black marks upon the ceiling. Whoever was upon the rocking horse spurred the dappled beast in loud triumphant jerks across the protestant linoleum. Whoever had a dispute to settle closed and settled it there and then. Mr. Stanton Murray's departure let loose a festival of anarchy.

She was too young at that time to have made herself a theory; but her perceptions and preferences were acute. She had not been many hours in the Murray household without forming an opinion as to the value and function of the tall thing called "Father." Father was literally awful. His eye was like the eye upon the pillar that terrorised her dreams from the sign-board of the "Freemason's Arms." He was Justice unblinded, and with no weights or scales to hamper the freedom of his sword-play. His tread, though heavy, was silent; his manner, though absent, was severe. He was a mixture of Blue-Beard and the Giant Grim-Bloodyman. He stalked through the house and garden like a plague. The young Stanton Murrays never knew the meaning of the word "black" as applied to Monday, for then it was that the 9.18

removed him gratefully to town (that was one of the advantages of living in the country), and they had invented and sang, strictly in private, a version of "Sally in Our Alley," which ran:—

> "Of all the days within the week I hate and loathe but one day,
> And that's the day that comes between a Saturday and Monday."

There had been a debate in the nursery as to whether "hate" or "loathe" were the stronger word, so they had compromised and put both in. Briefly, this meant that on Sundays Mr. Stanton Murray was *en famille* for dinner and tea, as well as for breakfast.

Breakfast on other days, though bad, was never quite so bad. The distraction of the morning paper, together with the necessity of consuming a sufficiency of food before leaving for town, limited the scope of his exertions. But Sunday was a day of tribulation. It was a new-fashioned household, and there was no breathing space for prayers or armistice for church time, so all day long the noise of battle rolled. It seemed to begin with the first peeping light of dawn, when Mr. Stanton Murray, clad only in his admirable striped pyjamas, strode in the corridors and commanded one or other of his offspring, in a voice that was actually strengthened

by the rushing of taps and roaring of cisterns, to "COME OUT OF THE BATHROOM!" It persisted through breakfast, when porridge, whether burnt or lumpy, was consumed, not without tears. It swelled to a climax at dinner, when the clattering of a fork sounded in frightened ears like an avalanche, when an overturned glass caused the havoc of a tidal wave. There was always one scapegoat at least, who got no pudding; but in the roast-beef stage was bidden, "Go out of the room!" Terrible indeed to hear one's name so called upon. There was nothing convivial about dinner when Mr. Stanton Murray was at home. No one could fill up a milky glass with water then and call it "ginger-beer," no one could make a pipe of peace out of a crust of bread. A child could not speak to its mother without being told to make less noise, or to stop whining. There was always somebody who had to spend the afternoon in her own room.

Tea-time brought a lull, for then father was in the drawing-room. All the same, his nearness made itself felt. They did not care to compete as to who could take the largest bite from a slice of bread, and the print that teeth left in the butter was no long spiritually satisfying. Vengeance was his, and he invariably repaid.

She remembers in particular one example of his austerity. She had come in on a spring morning heated from the chase with some of the other children, and found him and the grown-ups eating crystallised ginger. "Oh, give me some," exclaimed a little Stanton Murray. "No, you shall not have any," replied father, "because you asked." And the stranger perceived with rounded eyes that this was not a joke.

A less tough breed than his own children would have gone down before him. She herself felt in his presence frailer than glass; but they took his violence philosophically. Each victim in turn would make the comment, "It's always *me*," and depart to be smacked or sent to bed with martyr-like resignation. She found, too, that the alarums of their life, though shattering, held yet the gloriousness of battle. As the sailor boasts his combat with the fury of storms and weevils, as the pioneer with rhinoceros and niggers, so did she find that her blest security was looked on with contempt by these hardy swashbucklers. They had their answer ready for her when she talked of peace with honour, warm baths, skipping school, chocolate after medicine—they told her she was spoilt. She was a mere land-lubber of family life, and knew nothing of its fiercer intoxications.

Certainly these children remained uncowed. No surety of wrath to come could dissuade them from tearing clothes, wading in black mud with shoes on, from losing cap or glove or golosh in their morning excursions. Nor could it make less keen the joy of playing dodge round the house when a wind set all things slamming, and on occasion shattered both panes of glass in the wash-house door. Nor could it prevent them from capturing stray small boys, and putting them to extreme question in the nursery until the whispered word went round, "he's blubbing." They were indeed bold young imps to their father's Lucifer. Fortunately, and perhaps inevitably, they were inarticulate imps. If they had been less like him, they could perhaps have made plain their thoughts; but in that case, it is clear their thoughts would not have been the same, nor yet so salutary in the hearing.

II.

Sometimes they seemed to her unnaturally naughty. There was something so unreasonable in their alternating silences and vivacities. Why be dumb when you are simply wanted to show how nice you can be to a visitor? Why be uproarious

at five o'clock in the morning? Why be morose when you are asked to play oranges and lemons? Why bound like an acrobat when you have to be dressed in time to catch a train?

For good or ill, she was forced to face the fact that she was now on the side of the parents. It did not seem greatly to matter what the method was by which she sought to "bring them up"; she saw that her children would certainly do things that she would not like, and that she would have to do things that they would not like. She wished they would live always at their highest level of sweetness and intelligence. As it was, she had to scold them.

It was a point of honour with her not to be afraid of them She had ever a slavish longing to yield in anticipation of drooping mouth and puckering brow. But she conquered her weakness. She was the captain of her soul. She saw clearly that it is sometimes a moral duty to make children cry.

Had Mr. Stanton Murray so braced himself? She determined not to think about him. Maternity is not a state for moth-wing shades of meaning, moonbeam balances. Rather it is a series of emergencies. It needs swift decisions, boldness, dash. If necessary, the offender must be sent to bed.

She was eager that her children should not be "spoilt." (The word had rankled.) Her own faults were so plain to her. Would she have reached grown-upness, surer of her feet, she wondered, more capable and independent, for the preliminary hardships? Had she lost something irretrievable in those light years of non-existent discipline? The Stanton Murrays tip-toed upon her thoughts. She counted her losses. Chiefly she could never enjoy cold baths or salt with porridge. Still, she was sure that there were other things, too, if she would only think of them. Surely there must be some great benefit that accrued to those who had wept their golden youth into unconsoling ears? Had they not a hardiness of frame, a physical vigour? Was it worth the misery? Almost breathless with the daring of it, she wondered if Mr. Stanton Murray had tormented his mind in the same way. Had he——?

On the whole, she believed herself to be a success. She was almost certain that her children liked her, and were glad when she came in. She was sure that they never wished her to be gone. She allowed herself to feel, in secret, that so benevolent a tyranny as her own could not fail of appreciation. Possibly she swaggered at times. The abyss was made ready for her pride.

It was a winter's afternoon. The children were waiting for her in the drawing-room. As she came downstairs to them, she could hear their cries of laughter. She opened the door and stepped into the room. Then she flushed, and her eyebrows drew together. They knew they were not allowed to riot in the drawing-room.

On the floor the cushions had been flung, on the cushions the children were sprawling; whatever game was in progress she did not stop to inquire. Enough for her, bear-garden, pandemonium, conduct unworthy of "nice little girl," or "any lady's child" (as the nurses say). She plucked the children from the cushions, and the cushions from the floor. It is probable that she shook them all a little. In the cause of order, civilisation, the law, she drove out happiness. If freedom meant merely licence—perhaps she was right.

Through the tears, the words reached her, "Up'tairs, up'tairs."

"Nonsense," she said briskly, but without anger (hers had been the victory). "You are not going upstairs again yet. You are going to stay here, and play with me."

(An invitation to the sheep from the butcher.) The small person steadied itself on its heels, and looked at her.

"I didn't say *I* wanted to go up'tairs again," it said. "I said I wanted *you* to go up'tairs again."

This was full-circle, and it dizzied her for a moment. She beheld herself and the blonde wraith of Mr. Stanton Murray standing shoulder to shoulder. In the pitiless eyes of a child she had assumed the burden of ogre-hood.

So here we go round——

BETHLEHEM

I.

Long ago and long ago
In the dark days of the earth
Came a little child to birth.
Gentler did his mother find
Patient beasts than human kind
And travailed so.

In the long unfriended night
All the sweet flower-woven hay
Breathed a summer where she lay;
Through the broken roof the stars
Showed her, as through prison bars,
Gentle light.

II.

Mary, Mother, take thy rest
With thy baby at thy breast,
Happy thou that canst not see
That so tender bud of thee

Scourged and bruised and crowned with thorn,
Crucified in agony,
Mocked, forsaken and forlorn,
Hanging on the bitter tree.
(*Keep, ah, keep from child of mine*
Such a lot as fell to thine.)

Weep not, Mary, lift thy head,
Christ, thy darling, is not dead,
He so underfoot was trod,
He so in the mire was pressed,
That small feet might walk clean shod
To the Kingdom of the Blest,
All the joys thou gavest Him
In the manger warm and dim
He at last shall give again
To the little ones of men.

III.

Love without grieving,
Wealth without thieving,
This world in laughter,
Paradise after.
Mary under her blue shawl
Singeth in the ox's stall.

THIS AND THIS

This was summer, this was peace:—
Scarlet-laden apple trees,
Cows that munch the dew-grey grass,
Boys that whistle as they pass,
Flying flowers and gulls a-flap,
Honey fields on Golden Cap,
Earth a blue and shining thing
To set the angels envying.

This was summer and this came:—
This was a city and is flame,
This was corn and now is mud,
This was water and is blood;
The belovèd and the lover
Carrion for earth to cover,
Youth and laughter and bright eyes
The worm's rich prize.

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